

THE HISTORY OF TWELVE DAYS

JULY 24th TO AUGUST 4th, 1914

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE
NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDING THE
OUTBREAK OF WAR BASED ON
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

By J. W. HEADLAM, M.A.

Formerly Fellow of King's College, Cambridge,
Author of "A Life of Bismarck," etc.

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THE HISTORY OF
TWELVE DAYS

To

J. E. W. H.; T. A. H.; H. R. H.; E. J. H.; C. M. H.

IN FLANDERS, INDIA, EAST AFRICA.

ὑμέων μὲν κλέος εὐρύ, οἳ ἐν προμάχοισιν ἄριστοι
πατρίδα καὶ ξυνήν σώζετε ἑλευθερίαν·
ων δ' ὕπερ ἢ δῆρις, τίνα δ' αἴτια, ὥς δὲ δίκαιοι
ἰαρνάμεθ', οἴκοι ἐγὼ τῶδ' ἀπέφηνα λόγῳ.
ἀλλὰ φίλοι δέξασθε καὶ αἰχμητὴν καὶ ἄνοπλον
εἷς νόμος ἀρχηγεῖ καὶ μία θρέψε πατρίς.

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PREFACE

THE following work is an attempt to analyse and explain in detail the events which immediately preceded, and were the cause of, the present war. I began it for my own satisfaction, and it is now published in the hope that it may be found useful by others who desire to master the contents of the diplomatic correspondence to which it is intended to serve as a guide.

After some consideration I found it necessary to place the examination in the form of a narrative; in this way alone was it possible to make clear the precise circumstances in which each document was written. The telegrams and despatches with which we have to deal are not abstract statements of political principles composed at leisure; each of them is an action; it represents a decision which was taken under urgent pressure, and was part of a continued course of action; its full significance can only be understood if we ourselves in imagination follow the course of events, day by day and hour by hour, so as to be able to put ourselves at each moment in the position of the actors.

To do this is not easy; quite apart from the general difficulties which are found in all historical narrative it is very difficult to determine on each occasion what information was at the disposal of the Ministers of the different countries. They had to deal with a situation which was not as clear to them as it is to us now. In many cases they could only guess at the motives and objects of the others; they were like a general who could not see what was going on at the other side of the hill.

When the information is full and detailed, as it is from London and Paris, these difficulties can to a great extent be overcome. Especially in the case of Great Britain the documents are so full that we can form a very fairly complete

narrative. For Russia, we have in addition to the Russian despatches, the very enlightening and interesting descriptions sent by the British and French Ambassadors. The Russian Orange Book itself has several omissions; it contains, however, a faithful record of the decisions made by the Government, though it does not contain to the same extent as do the British and French books an account of the information on which these decisions were made; in particular we must regret the absence of more communications from the Russian Chargé d'Affaires and Ambassador at Vienna. These lacunæ are, however, now to a great extent made good by the information contained in the Austrian Red Book, and with these and the despatches of Sir George Buchanan we are able to form a fairly correct account not only of their actions but of their motives.

Writing in the middle of the great war in which the future of the country is endangered by an enemy more powerful and more implacable than any that it has before met, it would be foolish to claim the merit of impartiality. Impartiality means that one is indifferent to the results of investigation, and to us the results are of vital moment. I will, however, say this, that even if not impartial, I have written no word which I do not believe to be true. Had I found in the course of the work that the result would be unfavourable to the justice and honesty of the British cause, I should have adopted the only possible course and kept silent till the war was over.

The prime and almost the sole authorities are the diplomatic correspondence published by the various Governments. These are :

(1) The British diplomatic correspondence published originally on August 5th as a White Paper, and subsequently reprinted under the title "Great Britain and the European Crisis." This may be taken as giving a full, accurate and practically complete record of all the communications dealing with the outbreak of war which passed between the British Government and British representatives abroad from the presentation of the Austrian Note to the declaration of war. The suggestion that portions of the correspondence have been omitted because it contains matters which require concealment is entirely without justification.

(2) The French Yellow Book. This was published in

November. It is available in two translations, the authorised translation published by *The Times*, and an official translation issued by the Government. This ranks as perhaps of equal importance with the English publication. Like it, it is very full and it appears to contain in the same way a complete record of the negotiations. In one way it has the advantage over the English Blue Book in that owing to the absence of the French President and Minister for Foreign Affairs during some days the Acting Ministry at Paris sent each day a full *résumé* of the situation. These accounts are of great interest as enabling us to follow the gradual development of the situation.

In regard to both the British and the French publications it must be noted that their great importance consists in the large mass of evidence accumulated; we have not here to do with isolated and selected despatches. While it would always be possible for any Government which wished to hide its real designs to produce a few despatches written to order, it would be quite impossible to produce so great a bulk of correspondence all of which is completely in the same tone and in complete harmony with itself. The value of these two publications is enhanced by the way in which they corroborate and supplement one another. While there is complete accord in regard to the facts at each stage of the negotiations there is great difference in tone, and in fact they each represent faithfully the spirit and character of the nation. While the British despatches show the extreme caution, moderation, restraint of an intensely practical mind dealing with the precise situation as it presents itself each day, in fact at each hour, the French despatches excel in logical analysis and in the brilliance with which the governing facts are placed in strong relief. Criticism might be made that this very quality causes from time to time a tendency to exaggeration, but it will in all cases eventually be found that what appears to be exaggeration is merely the simple truth. The preliminary matter dealing with events before July 1914 does not fall within the scope of this book.

(3) The Russian Orange Book. This was published in September. While it adds considerably to our knowledge of the course of events, it does not present in the same way a complete picture. There are considerable omissions, and we have none of those graphic descriptions of the state of affairs in other

capitals which we owe to the despatches of M. Jules Cambon, Sir George Buchanan, and Sir Maurice de Bunsen.

(4) and (5) The Belgian Grey Book and the Serbian Blue Book naturally deal only with a small portion of the narrative; within these limits the Belgian Grey Book appears to give the full text of the relevant despatches; that of Serbia is chiefly valuable as giving a picture of the conditions in the Austrian capital as they presented themselves to the Serbian Minister.

(6) The Austrian Red Book was not published until January; it gives us a very full account of the Austrian case against Serbia, and adds materially to our knowledge of the relations between Austria and Russia. As to the relations between Austria and Germany it is very disappointing, for this which is the most critical point in the negotiations is also that as to which we have least evidence. The despatches contained in it have strong characteristics of their own; considering that they are mostly telegraphic, they are curiously verbose. They give the official Austrian view with moderation and dignity; on the other hand they are superficial; they show no quickness to apprehend the real matters at issue with Russia.

(7) It is much to be regretted that we have not any satisfactory publication of the German official correspondence. There was presented to the Reichstag on August 4th a document entitled "*Vorläufige Denkschrift und Aktenstücke zum Kriegausbruch.*" Of this a translation into English has been officially issued by the German Government under the title of the "German White Book." The greater portion of this is occupied with an exposition of the course of events, but to it are attached twenty-seven documents, including the correspondence between the German Emperor and the Czar, and fragments of other telegrams are incorporated in the text. The nature of the publication, therefore, differs greatly from that put forward by the other Governments; in particular, in a large number of cases the telegrams included are obviously only small portions of the original. This in itself is very unsatisfactory, and in addition only those have been selected which appear to illustrate and substantiate statements made in the text. As a presentation of what happened the text itself is extremely unsatisfactory; as is pointed out in the course of this work many statements contained in it cannot be accepted as true,

and there are many very serious omissions. One can well understand that it would now be very difficult for the German Government to publish their correspondence in a more complete form, for to do so would necessarily draw attention to the inaccuracies and omissions in the White Book.

Since the outbreak of war the German Government has from time to time issued in different forms varied explanations as to their action. We have, for instance, a speech by the Chancellor, made in the Reichstag on December 2, 1914, which is chiefly occupied with the relations with Great Britain; a semi-official article in the *North German Gazette* of December 21st deals chiefly with the French Yellow Book, and this is supplemented by an official despatch from the Chancellor to German representatives dated December 24th. This is printed in an appendix to this book. In addition we have an interview with the Chancellor, published on January 25th, dealing with the question of Belgian neutrality.

Unfortunately these later explanations are of little help; the object of an explanation is presumably to remove difficulties. It cannot be said that in this the German Government have been successful; the explanations which they offer are generally inconsistent with one another, and inconsistent with the facts with which they profess to deal. In order to make this clear I have added some observations to the Circular Note of December 24th, which deserves attention as being the most highly official.

The feeling left upon my mind after a long and careful study of all that has been put forward by the German Government is that it is impossible to put any reliance on anything that they say either with regard to their own motives or intentions, or in regard to the simplest facts, unless their statements are amply corroborated from other sources. It is after all not a difficult thing to give a clear, consistent, and intelligible account of one's own actions even in a prolonged and complicated dispute. Such an account can, however, only be convincing if the explanation is in all details in accordance with what happened. Truth alone is always consistent with itself. As soon as there is something to be hidden then it becomes necessary to slur over important points, to omit essential steps in the narra-

tive, to avoid a full, clear and precise explanation. On the other hand, when we find an account which is not consistent with itself, in which important matters are completely omitted, in which the offers and suggestions of other States are not quoted but are passed over with vague and inaccurate generalities, then it is legitimate to assume that these qualities are evidence that something is being concealed. This is the feeling which we have throughout—something is being concealed. The English and the French publications seem on the face of them to be inspired by the great desire to bring out into the clearest light the course of negotiations, and to analyse the situation in the clearest manner. The more closely they are studied the more does this appear to be the case. In the German Book and other German official documents we have precisely the opposite phenomenon.

That this is not a mere general and vague accusation let me point out a few particular instances. Why was Sir Edward Grey's proposal for mediation rejected? The account given is, as is shown (page 141), one quite impossible to accept; our conclusion must be that the real reason for rejection was one which could not be avowed. Why were the negotiations broken off after Russian mobilisation? Here again we get an account which is very vague, and which is not supported by any documentary evidence. We find that essential documentary evidence has been omitted (see page 238), and we are justified in concluding that the whole statement is untrue. What were the relations between Germany and Austria? We have repeated statements that the German Government was using pressure upon Austria; all the evidence which we have is to the effect that this is not true. And then, again, what explanation can be given of such an incident as the publication of the telegram of July 30th in the *Westminster Gazette*, while at the same time it is suppressed in all German publications? Was this telegram really sent? If so, why was it not produced in a more official form? We have a right to demand an answer to this question from the German Government.

The action of the German Government has to this extent been successful, that they have been successful in persuading the German nation to believe that Russian mobilisation was aggressive; but this has only been done by themselves publishing

a version of what happened which is throughout misleading, and by excluding from general circulation in Germany the British diplomatic correspondence.

We may contrast with this the action of the British Government, who have themselves published an edition of the official English version of the German White Book and a translation of the Austrian Red Book. And, indeed, the British Government have no reason to avoid the fullest possible circulation of all available information, and the German publications are the best evidence of the justice of our cause.

It would, of course, be a great mistake to attribute bad faith or deliberate dishonesty to every small error of detail which may appear in any one of the publications. There are a considerable number of what are obviously mere slips. There are, *e.g.*, several in the German White Book, the editing of which is often careless, and there are discrepancies between it and the English version. To some of these I have called attention in the course of the narrative; others are so unimportant that they do not require mention. In the English Blue Book, as a matter of fact, so far as I am aware there is only one such mistake, namely, an error of date given to one of the enclosures in 105. On this, very fantastic theories have been built as, for instance, that the French Despatch 106 was really concocted in London. Of course, there is no foundation for any of these theories; it is sufficiently obvious that all that has happened is that some mistake has been made in London either in deciphering or in what may be called office routine. In many cases apparent errors are really due to the fact that much of the communication took place late at night; it will therefore happen that a despatch written, for instance, on July 29th, will not, as a matter of fact, have been taken to the telegraph office until after midnight; in this case it would be dated July 30th, although it belongs to the action of July 29th.

A good deal of the difficulty in framing a consecutive narrative arises indeed from the fact that though we know the date, we do not know the hour at which telegrams were despatched and received. It is clear that from the very beginning of the crisis there was liable to be much delay in the transmission of tele-

grams ; this will be illustrated by the delay in the reception at St. Petersburg of the Emperor's first telegram. It must also be remembered that as the larger number of the documents were sent in cipher, the ciphering and deciphering would take an appreciable time, and there is always room for small mistakes arising in the process.

While the German Government have refrained from any satisfactory publication of their own despatches they have been very eager to give to the world documents issued by other countries which have come into their possession. Of these the most important are the documents discovered in Brussels dealing with the military conversations between Great Britain and Belgium. It will be remembered that in 1756 Frederick the Great began the Seven Years' War by a sudden and apparently unprovoked invasion of the kingdom of Saxony. As soon as the Prussian army reached Dresden their first act was to search the records of the Palace for the original text of a secret treaty by which Saxony had given her adherence to the great coalition which was being framed against Prussia. It appears as though the German Government, whose actions are too often consciously modelled on those of Frederick the Great, determined to imitate him in this also. They hoped at Brussels to find evidence of an anti-German coalition which would *ex post facto* have justified their invasion of Belgium. In this they failed. The only documents they found were conclusive evidence that no such coalition or conspiracy had taken place. This did not prevent them, did not even prevent the Chancellor himself, from repeatedly and publicly giving to the world a false description of these documents. Another document of the same kind is the report of the Belgian Minister, a copy of which is printed in the Appendix.

It is essential to point out that we have in one way and another much information as to the mutual relations of the members of the Triple Entente. We know not only what was done in each of the three capitals but the communications which passed between them. This renders all the more noticeable the secrecy which throughout is maintained as to the mutual relations of Austria and Germany. It is in them that we have to seek the

real truth as to the origin of the difficulty and the subsequent development of the situation ; on them we are told nothing, we have no direct evidence, and until this is forthcoming much must be left to conjecture. The two German Powers have only themselves to blame if the interpretation of their action is very unfavourable to their honesty and their professed peaceful intentions.

While we have on the whole a very full knowledge as to the relations between the various States concerned, we are still to a large extent in the dark as to the internal discussions which were going on within each Government. This is of special importance with regard to Austria and Germany. As to Austria we must assume that Count Tisza and the Government at Buda Pesth were exercising constant influence over the Foreign Office at Vienna ; the nature and extent of this influence will have to be disclosed before we can fully understand the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government. With regard to Germany this is equally true. We are constantly in doubt how far we must attribute the inconsistencies of German statements to the differences of opinion between the responsible authorities. This is to a great extent due to the peculiarities of the German constitution and the traditions of the Prussian Government. Responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs is divided between the Secretary of State, the Chancellor and the Emperor. The constitutional relations of the Emperor to his official advisers have never been made clear, and have, especially since the fall of Bismarck, been the subject of constant discussion and criticism in Germany itself. In addition, it must always be remembered that the Chancellor is supposed to exercise a more immediate and constant supervision over foreign affairs than does the Prime Minister in other countries. As will be seen from a study of the correspondence, Foreign Ambassadors were sometimes received by him and sometimes by Herr von Jagow ; this is a system which necessarily has grave inconveniences, and must at the best of times lead to some uncertainty in the handling of critical affairs. There have been periods in the government of this country when similar uncertainty was produced by a want of a clear understanding as to the relative positions of the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister ; to a large extent it was probably this, for instance, which led to the outbreak of the Crimean War.

This difficulty has been much accentuated since the accession to office of the present Chancellor. The German constitution, which was drawn up by Bismarck himself to a large extent in order to suit his own personal qualities, implies that the Chancellor shall have thorough knowledge of international relations, and will be well qualified to conduct and supervise them. It does not appear that the present Chancellor has these qualities. Bismarck himself before he assumed office had served a diplomatic apprenticeship of thirteen years, and in particular had made himself acquainted with the conditions in the other German States, and at Paris, St. Petersburg and Vienna. The present Chancellor has served no such apprenticeship; not only does he appear to be without the necessary knowledge but, however eminent may be the capacities which qualify him for controlling the internal government of the country, it has been made abundantly evident ever since his accession to office that he is deficient in the very different qualities required for dealing with international relations.

This would have been less serious had the control of the Emperor, who is in this as in all other matters the ultimate authority, been of such a kind as to correct his mistakes. Those who are acquainted with the history of Prussia in the past will not be surprised to find that the interference of the monarch has now as in the past been a source of constant embarrassment. The world has been so blinded by the great achievements of Bismarck that it has forgotten that the years 1863 to 1890 form an isolated period very different in character from that which we generally find in Prussian history. Since the death of Frederick the Great the diplomatic history of Prussia has on the whole been very unfortunate. It is only necessary to refer to the events of 1806; the catastrophe of Prussia after 1815; the miserable record of the relations with Austria throughout the thirty years that followed; the repeated fiascoes which marked the whole reign of Frederick William IV. In nearly every case it will be found that one of the chief causes of the uncertainty and incompetence which have marked the conduct of foreign affairs has been the difficulty of establishing any satisfactory relationship between the King and his Ministers. On the whole the Kings of Prussia have shown little wisdom and ability, at any rate in this department of government, and again and again

they have made the position of the ablest of their servants an impossible one. Since the fall of Bismarck the management of affairs seems to have drifted into the older state of things.

The argument is carefully limited to the immediate occasion of war. I am not concerned with the larger causes which brought about the situation in Europe that existed at the beginning of July; the problem we have is, given this condition of things, how it was that war resulted from it. It has, however, been necessary to insert three chapters of an introductory character dealing with the previous relations between Serbia and Austria, with the Triple Entente, and the history of Belgium. The first of these has been the most difficult part of the book; and I would gladly have omitted it, for I am fully aware of the extreme obscurity of the events with which it deals, and the temerity which is shown by any one who, while not personally acquainted with Eastern Europe, embarks on the troubled waters of Balkan politics.

I hope, if leisure permits me, on a later occasion to deal more fully with the history of Europe during the last two decades.

While it is indeed true that it is only by a study of the general history of Europe during the last generation that the ultimate cause of war can be made clear, this does not detract from the supreme importance of the events dealt with in this book. There have been occasions when the immediate occasion for a great war has been of comparatively small importance; this is not one of them. There has never been a case in which the circumstances in which a war originated have exercised such a strong influence upon the character of the struggle. In particular the whole attitude of the German nation towards Great Britain is if not justified, for it is incapable of justification, at least explained by the belief which the Government of that country have encouraged them to hold that Germany has been the victim of an unprovoked attack in a moment of great national peril on the part of Great Britain. The general opinion of the civilised world has already repudiated this belief; its entire baselessness can best be shown by a careful study day by day of the actions of the various Governments before the war began.

There is, of course, still much that is not known and many points of detail on which we require further information, but even at the present time our knowledge is much fuller than it is of many great events which have happened many years ago, and it is difficult to believe that any further publication will be able to alter the verdict. My own experience is that a long and careful study of the publications made by the different Governments only confirms the impression produced nine months ago by the issue of the British White Paper. We can only judge by the evidence before us; this seems to prove that we are here face to face with a carefully planned conspiracy against the peace and security of Europe.

This explanation of German policy before the war began seems to me to be the more probable in that it is in entire accordance with their procedure during the course of the operations. In the one as in the other we find ourselves in the presence of a remarkable moral and psychological problem. We are conscious that they had come into a state of mind in which they apparently genuinely believed, as they still believe, that one canon of conduct must be applied to their own actions, another to that of any other nation. The belief that some act would be for the material benefit of Germany is apparently considered to be sufficient justification for it. If we look at the diplomatic history we find this phenomenon constantly recurring. It is justly pointed out that Germany was bound by relations of interest and honour to her ally; she could not be expected to desert Austria. That, however, which is a virtue in Germany becomes in other nations a crime. That Russia should continue her protection of Serbia, that France should be loyal to her ally, that Great Britain should not in a moment of danger at once desert those with whom she had lived in terms of close amity and co-operation for many years is represented as a heinous offence. The whole defence of German action is that it was based on intelligent self-interest; the worst charge brought against Great Britain is that she was also guided by this motive. It is in regard to Belgium that this phenomenon is most apparent. And indeed it may be said that the conduct of Germany throughout the latter part of the negotiations, where there is no opportunity of disguising the real facts, is of great help in elucidating her actions during the earlier part where the events are more obscure. So long as

the neutrality of Belgium was of benefit to Germany as against the aggression of France, the neutrality and the guarantees were always treated with the gravest respect. So soon as the situation had altered, and the Treaty of London was an impediment to German ambition, then we are told that the situation had changed and it had *ipso facto* ceased to have any validity.

The most flagrant instance of this inconsistency is to be found in the attitude towards Belgium after the beginning of the war. The German Government has never ceased to speak of the misfortunes which have come upon Belgium as a natural and just consequence of her refusal to acquiesce in the invasion of her territory. The German Chancellor in a speech of December 2, 1914, in the Reichstag says :

When on the 4th August I spoke of the wrong which we were committing by our invasion of Belgium it was not yet certain whether the Government of Brussels would not in the hour of necessity make up their mind to spare the land and to withdraw under protest on Antwerp. You will remember that on the suggestion of the military authorities after the capture of Liège I addressed a new demand to this effect to the Belgian Government.

It is here clearly indicated that this was the proper course for the Belgian Government to take ; they were to give up their resistance to the German advance and acquiesce in the wrong which had been done by Germany.

But Belgium is not the only country the neutrality of which has been guaranteed by the Powers. Switzerland is in the same position, and at the outbreak of war the question of the maintenance of Swiss neutrality had also to be considered. How did Germany regard this ? On the 4th of August the German Government received from the Swiss Government a notification of their neutrality, and to this they answered :

The Government has had the honour of receiving the Circular Note addressed on the 4th August to the Powers who signed the Treaties of 1815, in which the Federal Council declare that during the course of the present war the Swiss Confederation will by all the means in its power maintain and defend its neutrality and inviolability of its territory. The Imperial Government has taken note of this declaration with sincere satisfaction, and it relies on it

that the Confederation, thanks to its strong army and the unconquerable determination of the whole Swiss people, will repel any violation of its neutrality.¹

What is the difference between Switzerland and Belgium? The neutrality of Belgium is violated by Germany, and therefore this wrong should be condoned; if the territory of Switzerland is violated by the French, the wrong is to be resisted by the whole force of the Confederation and the army. Could inconsistency go farther?

The official correspondence has been the subject of a very large number of pamphlets both in England and France. It seems impossible to acknowledge indebtedness to all of these, and in many cases where the view which I take is identical with that put forward by some other writer my own account had been written before I had received his work. The first attempt at a full and detailed treatment is to be found in "The Diplomatic History of the War," edited by Mr. M. P. Price. This contains, besides the official documents, some additional material collected from the newspapers. The work, unfortunately, was written before the appearance of the French and Austrian correspondence; apart from this, as will be seen, I differ fundamentally from him in his reading of the situation. On the whole it may be said that the most serious criticisms of British policy emanate from English and not from German sources. Many writers seem to start from the view that when so great a catastrophe has occurred they must impute a portion of the blame impartially to every country. This gives an appearance of justice that in this case seems to be only an appearance. "Why We Are At War," by members of the Oxford School of History, which was one of the earliest publications, still remains one of the best guides. A very useful shorter treatment is that of an American writer, "The Evidence in the Case," by Mr. James M. Beck (New York and London, 1914: G. P. Putnam's Sons). A useful French pamphlet is "Qui a voulu la guerre?" by MM. E. Durkheim and E. Denis (Paris, 1915: Librairie Armand Colin). M. Denis has since

¹ I am indebted for this quotation to M. Emile Waxweiler; see "La Belgique neutre et loyale," p. 52.

published a brilliant study of the whole subject under the title "La Guerre."

There is very large literature on the Belgian question. The fullest and most weighty treatment of it is that by M. Emile Waxweiler, "La Belgique neutre et loyale" (Lausanne, 1915: Librairie Payot & Cie), a translation of which is, I understand, shortly to appear.

If we go outside the official publications we get little help from German sources. It is remarkable that no attempt seems to have been made to present any full and careful statement of the German point of view. The greater number of the newspaper and magazine articles produced by German apologists in America are probably not taken seriously even by their own authors; they contain numerous statements which show only the low opinion they seem to hold of American intelligence and American knowledge of European affairs. The most important of these is an article by Professor Delbrueck (*Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1915).

The most important among German publications is a pamphlet by Dr. Karl Helfferich, the present German Minister of Finance, "The Genesis of the Great War, in the light of the official documents published by the Governments of the Triple Entente." With regard to this, it is sufficient to say that he evades the real issue by practically beginning his narrative at the time of Russian mobilisation, and ignoring all that went before this and was the reason for this action on the part of Russia.

Count Julius Andrassy has recently published a pamphlet, "Wer hat den Krieg Verbracht," which contains an interesting exposition of the reasons why war with Serbia was necessary for Austria. Even though his treatment of many matters cannot be accepted, his attitude forms a welcome contrast to that of most German writers.

At the last moment I have received a copy of a German work containing a full treatment of the whole question "J'accuse," Von Einem Deutschen (Lausanne, Verlag von Payal, 1915). I have not been able to master its contents, but it appears to be a formidable indictment of the action of the German Government.

"Randglossen zum französischen Gelbbuch" (Concordia

Deutscher Verlags Anstalt), contains a number of articles which have appeared in various newspapers.

Two other German pamphlets, Fenkwaldt "Die Vorgeschichte des Kriegs" and "Englands Mitschuld am Weltkrieg," I have not been able to procure.

Mr. R. W. Seaton Watson has been good enough to read through the first chapter, and has given me many valuable suggestions.

For the dedicatory verses I am indebted to Mr. J. W. Mackail, formerly Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford.

References throughout are to the translation of the correspondence of the various countries issued by the British Government. The references are in each case made to the number of the document, and the initial letters, for instance A=Austria, are used to show to which of the books reference is made. For convenience I have used "E," that is English, in reference to the British Blue Book rather than "B," which might have led to confusion with the Belgian Book.

Since the work was in type a collected edition of all the documents has been issued under the title "Collected Diplomatic Documents relating to the outbreak of the European War." It contains in addition a certain number of documents which are not contained in the various Government publications. In the latter portion of the book I have been able to insert a few references to this volume, which must always form the text for any study of these events.

WIMBLEDON,

May 15, 1915.

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PART I

CHAPTER

SERBIA AND AUSTRIA

I

It was August in the year 1913. The long-drawn crisis in the Balkans seemed at last over. The Treaty of Bucharest had been signed, and the Ambassadors, who for many months had been holding their conferences in London, were at last separating for their holidays. Sir Edward Grey, in giving an account of their work to the House of Commons, was able to say :

For some time meetings of the Ambassadors have been regarded as the symbol of the existence of the Concert of Europe, but we have happily reached the stage at which I trust the Concert of Europe is so firmly established that the mere fact that the meetings of the Ambassadors have adjourned for the holidays will raise no doubts as regards the health and well-being of the Concert of the Great Powers of Europe. On the contrary . . . I think every one who considers how startling and distressing and sudden have been the events of the last few weeks in the Balkan Peninsula, and yet that there have been none of those rumours as to the intentions of the Great Powers which we had in the earlier stages, will I think be convinced that at the present moment the relations between the Great Powers are not in a condition which threaten the peace of Europe or give rise for apprehension.

It is true, of course, that there has not been unanimity between the Great Powers. Any one who reads the Continental press will see that there is not unanimity on all points. The opinions expressed in the different countries on the merits of the different points of the Treaty of Bucharest differ ; but there are no differences of opinion which show a tendency to divide the large groups of the Great Powers into opposing camps.¹

It was indeed one of the most remarkable achievements of diplomacy. For thirty years it had been a constant fear that an

¹ *The Times*, August 13, 1913.

explosion in Turkey would bring with it a European war. The explosion had come; for three years there had been a constant succession of revolutions and wars. No ingredient of discord was wanting. A series of revolutions in Turkey, assassinations, *coups d'état*, the Sultan deposed, a Parliament established and overthrown, every national and religious animosity aroused to its extreme extent, and this followed by a sudden and unforeseen series of events, so that from day to day it was impossible to say what would happen; the formation of the Balkan League, the attack upon Turkey and the unexpected collapse of the Turkish forces, the struggle for the Albanian coast, the league of friendship suddenly broken up and the allies of yesterday changed into fanatical foes, another war with Turkey, a war between the allies, the mobilisation of Austria and of Russia, and all this happening in the most inflammable part of Europe in which great interests of every Power were involved.

This crisis had originated at a time when the two great groups into which Europe was divided were in a state of most acute tension; the Moroccan affair had brought England, France, and Germany to the verge of war. And yet it had been possible to guide Europe through this unprecedented crisis in such a way that the two Powers who a few months before had been standing armed against one another co-operated in the work of peace.

“The Powers of Europe set to work to see if they could not disappoint the gloomy expectation by localising the conflict”—and they succeeded.

This result was only possible because neither group of Powers wanted war, and when the desire for conflict was absent it was found, as it always will be found, that there is no problem so complicated, no opposition of interests so acute, that a steady concentration on the particular matter at stake, if undertaken in a spirit of loyal co-operation, will not find some solution. And so it had come about that that which had appeared to be the almost certain forerunner of a great catastrophe had resulted in establishing the concert of Europe on a firmer basis than it had ever been since the two great alliances had been formed.

And yet at the very moment that he was speaking, the danger which seemed to have been conjured was, though he did not know it, imminent. Four days before the Government of Austria addressed to that of Italy the intimation that they pro-

posed to take action against Serbia. They defined this action as defensive, and hoped to bring into operation the *casus fœderis* of the Triple Alliance. What this meant was that Austria was proposing to declare war upon Serbia, though she knew that war upon Serbia would involve a conflict with Russia, and she was asking, under the terms of the Triple Alliance, for the assistance of her two partners, Italy and Germany.

Had this request been accepted, the great conflict between the Alliances would at once have broken out. It was refused. The Italian Government said :

If Austria intervenes against Serbia it is clear that a *casus fœderis* cannot be established ; it is a step which she is taking on her own account, since there is no question of defence, inasmuch as no one is thinking of attacking her. It is necessary that a declaration to this effect should be made to Austria in the most formal manner, and we must hope for action on the part of Germany to dissuade Austria from this most perilous adventure.

But it was not only the refusal of Italy that restrained the Austrians. We may, I think, take it that Germany also refused her support. Throughout the Balkan crisis there had been repeated evidence of a serious difference of view between the two Empires, and it was the restraint placed upon Austria by Germany that alone made the preservation of peace possible. England and Germany had worked together, and it was their co-operation which had smoothed away the difficulties that inevitably arose from the opposition of interests between Russia and Austria.

A year went by. Once more Austria proposed action against Serbia. This time the restraining hand was withdrawn ; Great Britain could no longer depend in her efforts for peace on the co-operation of Germany. Before, Europe had passed unscathed through three years of war, revolution, and tumult. Now the single mad act of a few raw and fanatical young men was sufficient within a few weeks to plunge the whole of Europe into war. One year showed how war could be avoided even in the most difficult circumstances, the next showed how it could be brought about against the united will of Europe. In 1912 and 1913 Russia and Austria had stood for months opposed to one another, each with her army mobilised upon the frontiers, but the troops were at length sent home, and except for paying the bill no one

was any the worse. In 1914 the very first movements of troops brought menacing notes, ultimatums, and war.

In what did the difference between the two years consist? Why was it that peace, which could be preserved one year, was in the next year hopeless from the very beginning? This is the problem which in the present work I propose to discuss.

II

Austria and Serbia have not always been enemies. In the secular struggle between the Crescent and the Cross, in which for so many generations Austria had stood forward as the bulwark of Europe, her armies were always ready to support, conquer, and incorporate Christians in their struggle for freedom. The high mark of Turkish conquest had been when the armies of the Sultan stood before the gates of Vienna, and as the tide gradually ebbed it was inevitable that the land which was rescued from the flood came under the dominion of the House of Hapsburg. The rescued territories were to a very large extent occupied by different branches of the South Slav or Serb race, broken fragments of what, but for the Turkish conquest, might well have become a great empire, a centre of order and civilisation. As the years went on the Austrian dominions advanced to the Danube and the Drina. It was almost accident that they did not press on to the Balkan Peninsula itself. There had, in fact, been a time when they had crossed the Danube. It was Prince Eugene who first came as a liberator to the Serbs, and for twenty years Belgrade was an Austrian city. Had it not happened that the interests of the Emperor were diverted to Western Europe, and had he not been occupied in securing his possessions for his daughter Maria Theresa, it might well have been that two centuries ago the House of Austria might have won the Western Balkans as it had won Slavonia and Croatia. But henceforth the whole energies of the Monarchy were required for defending its possessions against the rising power of Prussia. Serbia fell again under the power of the Porte, and when she won her self-government, and eventually her independence, it was due to the spirit of her own people rather than to the support of Austria and of Russia. The independence she had won for herself she hoped to extend to the other Serbs who

were still subjected to the Turks ; but in 1878 a mandate was given by Europe to the Austrian Empire to occupy and govern the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an integral part of the ancient Serbian Empire, the inhabitants of which were identical in race and to a large extent (so far as they had not adopted the Mahommedan faith) like the Serbians, members of the Orthodox Church. It was a fateful act ; by it Austria took the first step towards becoming a Balkan Power. It was as fatal to Serbian hopes and ambitions as the annexation of Lombardy had been to the Italian patriots. It was not, however, for many years that the full significance of this act became apparent. During the inglorious reign of Milan the national hopes of Serbia found little room for expression ; he was in fact, if not in name, a paid vassal of Austria, and it seemed as though the ultimate fate of Serbia was to be gathered, with the rest of the Serb nation, into an enlarged Austria-Hungary. With the assassination of Alexander, and the accession of the rival House of the Kara-georgevitch, the Radical party, secure in the support of Russia, assumed the government of the country. The land was the scene of a great national revival, the history of which remains to be written, and is still very obscure. Men began to plan the restoration of the Great Serbian Monarchy, of which the first step must be the rescue of the "Serbian brothers who pined under the alien reign of Austria." Serbia was to play the part of Piedmont, and the kingdom was to be the nucleus of a new Great Serbian Monarchy, which would extend from the Adriatic to the Ægean.

Suddenly the revolution broke out in Turkey. This seemed to them to offer the opportunity for the first step in the realisation of these hopes. Disappointment followed. Austria-Hungary in October 1908 declared that Bosnia and Herzegovina, which she had hitherto only occupied on an uncertain tenure, were annexed to the Monarchy. There was, in fact, nothing surprising in this act, which, though carried through in a manner regardless of the ordinary courtesies of diplomacy might be considered as the logical and necessary result of thirty years' government, in which many of the material advantages of Western culture had been brought to these districts which so long had suffered the worst cruelties of Turkish mis-government. But to Serbian hopes it was fatal. Serbia demanded compensa-

tion, and asked that the two provinces should be made autonomous; this would still have left hopes that in the future they might again be separated from the Monarchy. Alone, however, she was helpless. She turned for help to Russia; but Russia, crippled by her campaign against Japan, could give no assistance. Serbia laid her grievances before the Powers, and offered to accept their verdict. Their verdict was an adverse one, and after six months of crisis the Serbian Government were compelled to submit and to make a declaration.

Serbia recognises that the *fait accompli* regarding Bosnia has not affected her rights, and consequently she will conform to the decisions that the Powers may take in conformity with Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin. In deference to the advice of the Great Powers, Serbia undertakes to renounce from now onwards the attitude of protest and opposition which she has adopted with regard to the annexation since last autumn. She undertakes, moreover, to modify the direction of her policy with regard to Austria-Hungary, and to live in future on good neighbourly terms with the latter.

The Government had promised, but the engagement was not ratified by the nation. Wild, passionate, fanatical, unchecked by experience, drunk with dreams of a great future, they refused to surrender the great hopes by which they were inspired, and from this time it was decreed that Serbia had two enemies, the hereditary enemy, the Turks on the south, and the new enemy, "the Second Turkey" on the north. For the struggle against the two the nation began to prepare. Societies were founded which, under the guise of education and physical culture, were to prepare the nation for the conflict which was impending. We are indebted to the Austrian Government for interesting information as to their character and activity. They were similar to those which have arisen in other nations under similar circumstances. The *Narodna Odbrana*, in both its aims and its methods, was closely akin to *Young Italy* which, under the guidance of Mazzini for thirty years, prepared the Italians for their struggle with Austria. It has much in common with the *Tugendbund* which was founded in Prussia when she lay prostrate under the dominion of France, and which was to arouse in the German nation a consciousness of the national unity which they must win by their own efforts. As will always

happen under such circumstances, besides the legitimate preparation for war and revolution, these societies could not keep themselves free from other and more reprehensible methods. Political assassination is a crime for which there can be no excuse or palliation, but as a historical fact there is, I think, no instance in which the desire for national liberation when driven into underground channels, has kept free from it. We all know how similar crimes culminating in the last and great attempt on the life of Napoleon III, stained the Italian struggle for liberation. In Ireland we ourselves have been not without experience of the same phenomenon; and those who study the records of the *Narodna Odbrana* will call to mind the curious resemblance which is to be found to the National German Movement which followed the War of Liberation in 1815. When I read of these young men fresh from school and college receiving instruction in the use of the revolver and the bomb, my mind goes back to the young students of Jena and Giessen who attended the classes held by the brothers Follen, and who in the same way learnt from them the use of the arms by which they were to free their country by assassinating its tyrants.

If we are to understand the nature of this agitation and the acts to which it led, we must remember that the Serbs had for five hundred years lived under Turkish rule, and that still on their immediate borders were territories in which murder and rapine were events of daily occurrence. They were indeed in a social condition similar to that which prevailed hundreds of years ago on the Scottish and Welsh borders. At the same time there had been given to the nation what, perhaps, was the fatal gift of the most democratic constitution in Europe. It was, moreover, a nation in which there was no hereditary aristocracy, for all the nobles had been killed by the Turks, and no well-to-do middle class, and the rivalry of the two dynasties had caused the monarchy to be not the national support and guide of the nation but a chief source of demoralisation.

The full description of the work of the societies issued by the Austrian Government should be read always, however, with the remembrance that it is a partial and hostile statement. One short extract from the depositions of a former member of the *Narodna Odbrana*, whether true or not, at least gives a striking picture of the state of society.

On one occasion, during my service with Božo Milanović, I was ordered to accompany a man to a peasant in Lijasnica on the Drina, who would give us all necessary information and show us everything, so that we two could kill Ljubo Stanaričić, a Serbian officer of Reserve, who had fled to Bijeljin. For the Committee of the *Narodna Odbrana* had learnt that Ljubo Stanaričić was dangerous to the Serbian State, and had resolved that he should be put to death.

That man and I received instructions from Božo Milanović to go to a certain place across the Drina, and to kill Ljubo Stanaričić, who lives just on the bank of the Drina on the Bosnian side in the district of Bijeljin. I and that man had descended into the Drina, but because the water was deep, and we saw that Ljubo was walking round his house with a gun on his shoulder, we returned to that peasant's house. As I saw that we could not kill him with the knife, I sent that man to Šabac to tell Božo Milanović that it was not possible to kill Stanaričić in the manner he desired, namely, with the knife. On this, I received orders from Božo Milanović that we should kill him in any case. We then determined to shoot him with a gun. According to Božo's instructions, the man who was with me was to shoot and kill him, and I was to confirm whether these instructions were carried out. In the meantime, however, a mounted gendarme brought us instructions from the District Prefect of Šabac that we were to return, and to abandon the original project. And so we returned to Šabac.¹

In 1912 the year came. The Turkish revolution was followed by the formation of the Balkan League; in the war which ensued it was seen that the physical and national regeneration had not been in vain, and the Serbians, who a few years before had been defeated and routed by the Bulgarians, now took a great part in the defeat of the Turkish armies. "After Kossovo came Kumanovo." Once more their hopes were shattered by the intervention of Austria. It was for Serbia an essential and legitimate hope that she should obtain access to the sea. Austria interposed her veto. The hopes of Serbia had to be subordinated to the peace of Europe. The intervention of Austria and the support and encouragement given by Austria to Bulgaria brought about a second war, and in the final settlement determined by the Treaty of Bucharest, Serbia emerged greatly enlarged indeed in her territory, having won for herself a reputation and position in the Balkans which a few years before

¹ A. Appendix 5, pp. 44 and 45.

none could have anticipated, but still once again disappointed in her hopes.

The Treaty of Bucharest did not, indeed, offer a prospect of a permanent settlement; it satisfied no one; it left Bulgaria deprived of territory which she had won by her own efforts; the division of the country taken from the Turks did not coincide with the distribution of the population; Serbia was bitterly disappointed that she had again no access to the sea. The difficulties, however, all arose from the refusal of Austria to allow Serbia to obtain any part of Albania, and so to gain possession of a port on the Adriatic. This it was which forced on war with Bulgaria, and led to all the troubles that followed. We can well understand the motives which influenced them, and yet it is impossible not to condemn them as shortsighted; it was this decision which interfered with the permanent peace of the Balkans, which once again threw the Serbians into acute opposition to Austria, and which gave ground for the well-justified suspicion that Austria and Germany wished to undo all that had been gained by the Balkan League and the first war with Turkey.

The real part taken by Russia in these affairs is in many points obscure. We know, indeed, that the Balkan League was formed with her knowledge and under her protection. It is a policy for which no excuse is necessary. From whatever motives it was undertaken, it was the beginning of a better period in the tragic history of the Balkans. It is said that it was undertaken as a move against Austrian influence. Of course, if it were successful it would result in a great, and we may add a deserved increase of Russian influence, and there was much probability that it would arouse the jealousy of Austria. But the estrangement from Austria if it resulted would be an accident, perhaps an inseparable accident, not the object of the move. The avowed objects were quite sufficient both as a cause and a justification. To free the Christians from the Turks, to found a friendly league of the four Christian States, this would be a work which any statesman and patriot might be proud to have achieved, and from which he could not be diverted by the fact that it might be inconvenient to the Germanic Powers. After all, it was the fate of the Balkan Slavonic nations that was the chief matter of interest, and there was no reason why

that should be subordinated to Austrian policy and German ambitions.

The attitude of the Austrian Government to the Balkan Union is shown in the introduction to the Red Book, where it is obviously regarded merely as a step in the conflict between Russia and Austria, and in the attempt towards universal dominion attributed to Russia.

As the realisation of these plans would injure important interests of Austria-Hungary and Germany, and as it therefore must come up against the unavoidable opposition of these Powers, it was the endeavour of Russian policy to weaken their power of resistance. The powerful central European union which barred the way to the universal dominion of Russia must be shattered, and Germany must be isolated. The first step was to hem in the Hapsburg Monarchy by the creation of the Balkan Union, and to undermine its authority by the Pan-Slavist and Serbian intrigues in its frontier territories. A necessary condition for carrying out this plan was the overthrow and expulsion of the Turks in order that the increased power of the Christian Balkan States should be free to be used against the two Central Powers.¹

These events left among the Serbian people an assured conviction that henceforth it was in Austria and in Austria alone that she must find her bitter and impassible enemy. "Just as at first the Turks attacked us from the south, so Austria attacks us to-day from the north. If the *Narodna Odbrana* preaches the necessity of fighting Austria, she preaches a sacred truth of our national position." The Press and the societies took care that this belief was kept before the people. We have no evidence that in this they were carrying out the wish of the Government. Whatever might have been their plans for a more distant future, at that time the Serbian Government were far from desiring a further outbreak of war. They had their own work to do in the organisation of the newly acquired provinces; a treaty was being negotiated with Montenegro; the settlement of serious difficulties regarding the position of Roman Catholics in the kingdom was the subject, during the spring of 1914, of negotiations with the Vatican, which resulted in a concordat perhaps more favourable to the Catholic Church than that in any other country in

¹ A. p. 4.

Europe. Above all, the country and the army, and in Serbia the two are identical, required time for rest and recuperation. The country had emerged from its recent trial with a greatly increased reputation; the Government had shown great power of organisation, the people courage and self-sacrifice, and their first need was a time of rest and concentration. The Prime Minister, M. Pashitch, who enjoyed the reputation of being one of the wisest statesmen in Europe, was not likely to desire to imperil what had been secured by embarking on any fresh adventure.

In one way, however, the very success which Serbia had attained could not fail to introduce new and even more serious causes of difference with Austria-Hungary. The enthusiasm which had been aroused among the Croats on the success of the kindred Monarchy seemed, perhaps, to have made the conception of an eventual union between the Serbs in the Kingdom and the Croats less visionary and problematic than it before had been. In the programme of the nationalists we find, indeed, three different elements. Firstly, the defence of the Kingdom against any attack from Austria—and who can say that such an attack might not be anticipated? Secondly, the old desire now felt more strongly than ever before for the rescue of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Austro-Hungarian rule. Thirdly, there was the belief that the kindred Croats should eventually take their place in the Great Serbian State. The conception was an attractive one; but it does not seem to have been one which a wise Government would have encouraged, and we have no evidence that it was encouraged by the Serbian Government. It was an idea which could only be realised by the partition of Austria, and it must therefore arouse the suspicion and hostility, not only of Austria and of Germany, but of every one in Europe who wished to avoid the raising of great questions which could not be settled without a European war. Quite apart from this, even allowing for the enthusiasm with which the victory of Kumanovo had been received, we may be allowed to doubt whether the scheme was practical. Here the analogy with the movement for Italian unity breaks down. We come, in fact, against one of the most difficult problems of politics. The Croats, though in race and in language practically identical with the Serbs, on the other

hand belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and the difference of religion might well outweigh the identity of origin. Which is stronger, the ties of common language and nationality or the difference of religion? This is a problem which has in the past and probably will in the future continue to test to the uttermost the resources of statesmanship. The Croatsians were incorporated in the great Catholic monarchy which had always been the strongest support of the Papacy; their adherence to the Latin faith was a sign that they belonged rather to Western than Eastern Europe and, at any rate so far as present politics go, the distinction of faith might well have been taken as a most convenient line for political adherence. The difference between the Latin and the Greek Church, with all that it implies in the development of civilisation for more than a thousand years, might well in the long run prove the stronger, and it might well have been that the Croatsians might have found their proper place as a self-governing State within the Austrian Empire. And we must not forget that under Austrian and Hungarian rule, though they had many just causes of political complaint against their Magyar rulers, they enjoyed a material prosperity and a degree of culture and civilisation which they could hardly have expected in conjunction with a young, inexperienced State such as Serbia.

There was, indeed, much discontent among the Croatsians, and deservedly so; but it seems also evident that this was much exaggerated by the Serbian agitators. If, indeed, there was any serious danger of these territories giving up their allegiance to the House of Hapsburg, there was no one to blame for it but the Austrian or, rather, the Hungarian Government itself. It would have been easy with a little statesmanship, some far-sightedness, more insight and generosity, to have made of them thoroughly loyal and contented subjects. They had genuine grounds for complaint. Among the most numerous nations of the Monarchy, they had been reserved for the worst treatment, and how little did they deserve it! It is, indeed, to the Croatsians that the present Emperor owes his throne. On the day when Jellachich rode into Vienna and laid his blood-stained sword upon the altar of St. Stephen's he had saved Austria from the insurgent Hungarians, but when the final settlement came about it was to the Hungarians that all the

rewards went. They were taken into partnership with the Germans in the government of the Empire, and the Croatsians were subjected to the unsympathetic rule of the alien, hostile Magyar. Renegades of liberty, the Hungarians are not the only nation who, in their distress, appealed not without success to the assistance and sympathies of Europe, but in the days of their power have subjected other races to a domination which they themselves justly rejected.

It has been said that the Austrian Empire is a necessity for Europe; if so, it was a necessity just because of the confusion of nationalities within its borders, but in modern days it could only continue to exist if it consented to become a free confederation of self-governing territories. If the Government of Austria was to be an instrument for continuing the rule of the German and the Hungarian over Slavonic races, then, indeed, it had signed its own death warrant. In the territories governed from Vienna this ideal had been nearly achieved; it might have been so completely but for the sinister influence of Magyar chauvinism, and in the Dual Monarchy it is the Magyar who has become more and more the dominant partner.

As an English writer has expressed it:

Faced by this great Serbian danger, and forced to realise at last that it was serious, a big man in Count Berchtold's place would have resolved to make Austria a home so attractive even to Serbian idealists that the half-civilised kingdom over the border, with its backward culture and Oriental morals, would have lured and beckoned them in vain. He would have made them feel, as the Poles have long felt, that they are Austrians with a share in the fortunes of the Empire. He would have made their autonomy a handsome reality. He would have banished the spies and the policemen, enemies of the Austrian idea more dangerous than all the Serbian bomb-throwers and comitadjis. He would have released the Croatsians from the Magyar yoke, and bidden Dalmatians, Croatsians, and Bosnians realise their Great Serbia to their heart's content within the Austrian Empire itself. That was the policy which the dead Archduke was supposed to favour. Against such a policy, conceived with some boldness of imagination, and executed with good faith and tact, the incitements and conspiracies of Belgrade would have been powerless.¹

The conduct actually pursued was the precise opposite to this.

¹ Brailsford, "The Origins of the Great War."

The demands of the Croatians were systematically refused and their complaints ignored. Worse than that, those who protested were subjected to the worst persecutions by the Austrian police. The disclosures of the Friedjung trial showed of what crimes the agents of the Austro-Hungarian Government would be guilty. The Croatian leaders were accused of treacherous conspiracy with the Serbs. It was eventually established that the evidence had been forged, and that the forgery was committed by members of the Austrian Legation at Belgrade. The Austrian Minister at the time was Count Forgách, who now holds the post of permanent Under-Secretary in the Austrian Foreign Office. It is to him that was entrusted the duty of drafting the Austrian ultimatum to Servia.

If we are to reckon up the acts of both sides which led to the enmity between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, one knows not to which the greater blame is to be attached. At least the crimes attributed to the Serbians were the work of private conspirators; the attempted murder of the Croatian leaders by forged evidence was the work of the official representatives of the Government.

We cannot share the surprise and indignation of the Austrian Government that a Serbian paper exclaimed: "What are called crimes in private life are called in Austria politics."

It is to acts such as these, and not merely to the agitation conducted from Serbia, that any discontent and disloyalty on the part of the Austrian South Slavs was due. Here, as often before, the cynical opportunism which has characterised Austrian policy throughout the reign of the present Emperor has brought its own condemnation and punishment.

For the House of Austria the situation was not a new one. It has been their fate that nearly every nation in Europe has won its liberty by a struggle against Austria. It was the Hapsburg kings who destroyed the last relics of the old Castilian liberties. It was the House of Hapsburg who, in their struggle against religious liberty and constitutional rights, deluged the Netherlands in blood. It was Austria which for three hundred years stood in the way of German unity and liberty, till Bismarck completed the work of Luther by expelling Austria from Germany. When Greece rose against the Turks it was in Austria and in Metternich that the Sultan found a champion and supporter

till Russia, France, and Great Britain completed the work against the ill-omened union of Turkey, Prussia, and Austria ; and the epic of Italian history is the fifty years' struggle against Austrian ascendancy. In the future the leaders of the Serbs may take their place in a line which began with William of Orange and includes Robert Blum, Batthyány, and Garibaldi.

III

Suddenly the world was horrified by a crime as purposeless as it was cruel and wicked.

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of the Emperor, and since the death of the Archduke Rudolf heir to the throne, with his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, were on a public visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. As they were driving through the streets an attempt was made on their lives ; a young man threw a bomb at the royal motor-car, but unsuccessfully. They continued their way to the Town Hall, and on their return, before leaving the city, went to visit an officer who had been wounded. The streets were ill-guarded ; there were few police ; notwithstanding the unsuccessful attempt of the morning the people were able to approach close to the royal carriage. A young man rushed forward and shot the Archduke and his wife.

It was an act without purpose or object. •The only crime of the Archduke was that he was the most prominent representative of the Austrian State. So far as his policy was known, it was supposed indeed that he desired a new arrangement of the Constitution by which more freedom and influence should be given to the Southern Slavs, and the predominance of the Hungarians in the Dual Monarchy should be checked. He could indeed be looked upon as an enemy of the Magyar rather than of the Slavonic race. In truth, however, what he represented was Austria herself—Austria, the dynasty and the army, that which was the single bond between all the races comprised within the Monarchy ; and in particular he was a champion of the Catholic Church, the faith of three-quarters of the Austrian peoples. In his person a blow was directed against the House of Hapsburg and the State which it had built up. It was an act which must arouse the deepest loyalty to the ruling House,

which was the chief political instinct among millions of the Austrians.

As to the authorship of the deed, we have the evidence which has since been published by the Austrian Government. More we shall probably never know. Most of the accomplices have paid the penalty for their crime, and of the others who took part in the investigation and were privy to the circumstances, how many will have fallen by battle and pestilence before all the terrible consequences of this deed are completed? This at least is clear: that the actual culprits—they were three in number—were young men, Austrian subjects, natives of Bosnia. It is said that the act had been suggested to them and the means of carrying it out provided by members of the Serbian secret societies, among whom several were members of the Serbian Civil Service and past or present officers in the Serbian army. That there was any complicity on the part of the Serbian Government there is no evidence of any kind put forward, though it is suggested that they had been guilty of criminal negligence in not keeping stricter control over the secret societies.

Who could be surprised that this crime called forth an overwhelming demand for punishment and reparation? From one end of the Monarchy to the other the cry went up that they must be done with this accursed race, that the "breed of vipers" must be crushed, that no Great Power could allow conditions to continue which made such acts possible, and that a decisive blow must be directed against the agitation of which it was the fruit. We cannot be surprised if at first the indignation found expression in popular tumults. And yet the extent to which they went at Sarajevo was remarkable; remarkable in that they were permitted by the police.

Terrible scenes took place: "Sarajevo to-day is like the scene of a pogrom. . . . There is no Serbian house of business, no Serbian dwelling, no Serbian house which has not been completely destroyed. The demonstrations which yesterday lasted from the earliest hours in the morning to the afternoon unfortunately degenerated into wild scenes of destruction, and the injury done is enormous." So writes a correspondent of the Austrian clerical *Reichspost*, a paper the evidence of which on such a matter is uncontrovertible.

IV

The murder took place on June 28th. Four weeks passed and no word of any kind came from the Austrian Government. The Serbian Minister, M. Yovanovich, had more than one conversation at the Austrian Foreign Office, but they were confined to a discussion of the quarrel which was going on between the newspapers of the two countries. On both sides very bitter language was used, but this was nothing new; violent attacks on other States and nations are, even in peace time, unfortunately not peculiar to the Press of Vienna, Budapest, and Belgrade. Austrian papers demanded the condign punishment of the whole Serbian race; Serbian papers answered by rehearsing the crimes of Austria. The Austrian Press would make the Serbian nation and Government responsible for the murder; the Serbian Press answered, if not by justifying the crime, by putting forward the reasons which might have inspired it, and in particular they attributed it to the misgovernment and ill-treatment of the Southern Slavs who inhabited the Dual Monarchy. The point was made that in Serbia the Government had no control over the Press, while in Austria and in Hungary there was an organised system by which the papers could be influenced by the Government. As M. Pashitch writes:

With us the Press is absolutely free. Newspapers can be confiscated only for *lèse majesté* or for revolutionary propaganda, in all other cases confiscation is illegal. There is no
 M. Pashitch,
 July 1. censorship of newspapers.

In these circumstances you should point out where necessary—for their information—that we have no other constitutional or legal means at our disposal for the control of our Press. Nevertheless, when the articles in our papers are compared with those of Austria-Hungary it is evident that the Austro-Hungarian journals originate the controversy, while ours merely reply.

Please also emphasise the fact that public opinion in Serbia is relatively calm, and that there is no desire on our part to provoke and insult Austria-Hungary. No one in Europe would know what our newspapers were writing if the *Korrespondenz-bureau* did not publish these items of news with the intention of doing as much harm as possible to Serbia.¹

¹ S. 20.

There were also mutual recriminations as to the treatment of Serbians in Austria and in Hungary, and demonstrations made against subjects of the Monarchy in Serbia.

During the past few days the Austro-Hungarian newspapers have been spreading reports to the effect that there have been demonstrations in Belgrade against the Austro-Hungarian Legation, that some Hungarian journalists were killed ; that Austro-Hungarian subjects in Belgrade were maltreated and are now panic-stricken ; that at the funeral of the late M. Hartwig¹ Serbian students made a demonstration against the Austro-Hungarian Minister, etc. All these reports are absolutely untrue and imaginary. Absolute calm prevails in Belgrade, and there were no demonstrations of any kind this year, nor has there been any question of disorders. Not only do the Austro-Hungarian Minister and his staff walk about the town without being molested in any way, but also no Austro-Hungarian subject has been in any way insulted, either by word or by act, as is reported by the Viennese journals ; least of all was any attack made upon the house of any Austro-Hungarian subject nor were any of their windows broken. Not a single Austro-Hungarian subject has had any cause for the slightest complaint. All these false reports are being purposely spread in order to arouse and excite Austro-Hungarian public opinion against Serbia.

The whole of Belgrade was present to-day at the funeral of the late M. Hartwig, together with the entire diplomatic body ; there was not the slightest sign of resentment shown by anybody. During the whole ceremony exemplary order was maintained, so much so that foreigners were impressed with the good behaviour of the crowd such as even in their own countries does not always prevail on similar occasions.

Be good enough to communicate the above to the Government to which you are accredited and to the Press.²

All this was, however, comparatively unimportant ; as had happened before, these popular demonstrations would within a short time have died out. The only matter of real interest was the action which the Government of Austria-Hungary proposed to take. As to this no information could be obtained. Their intentions were veiled under complete secrecy.

¹ M. Hartwig, Russian Minister at Belgrade, was perhaps the ablest and most active agent of the policy of the Balkan League. He had done much to help the Serbians, and was regarded as the most dangerous enemy of Austria. He died suddenly while on a visit to the Austrian Legation.

² S. 21.

In authoritative circles the excitement continues undiminished. Though the Emperor has addressed a letter to the Prime Ministers of Austria and Hungary respectively, and to the *M. Yovanovich*, Minister for Finance, Mr. Biliński, which calls for calmness, it is impossible to determine what attitude the Government will adopt towards us. For them one thing is obvious; whether it is proved or not that the outrage has been inspired and prepared at Belgrade, they must now or later solve the question of the so-called Great Serbian agitation within the Hapsburg Monarchy. In what manner they will do this and what means they will employ to that end has not as yet been decided; this is being discussed, especially in high Catholic and military circles. The ultimate decision will be taken only after it has been definitely ascertained what the inquiry at Sarajevo has brought to light. The decision will be in accordance with the findings of the inquiry.

In this respect Austria-Hungary has to choose one of the following courses: either to regard the Sarajevo outrage as a national misfortune and a crime which ought to be dealt with in accordance with the evidence obtained, in which case Serbia's co-operation in the work will be requested in order to prevent the perpetrators escaping the extreme penalty; or, to treat the Sarajevo outrage as a Great Serbian, South-Slav, and Pan-Slav conspiracy with all the manifestations of the hitherto repressed hatred against Slavdom. There are many indications that authoritative circles are being urged to adopt the latter course; it is therefore advisable to be ready for defence. Should the first-mentioned and wisest course be adopted, we should do all we can to meet the Austrian wishes in this respect.¹

Which of these alternatives would the Government choose? Would the demands to be directed to Serbia be confined to requiring their co-operation in the investigation and punishment of the conspiracy and to preventing similar crimes in the future, or would they take this opportunity to force the Serbian nation to surrender the great ambitions by which they had been inspired? Would they attempt to require a complete alteration in the policy and spirit of the Government, and insist on a return to the position of subordination to Austria which had existed during the reign of the last two kings of the dynasty of the Obrenovitch? On this depended the future of Serbia and also of Europe.

Day after day went by but the obscurity became even deepened. *M. Yovanovich* writes: "The most important question for

¹ S. 17.

us is, What, if any, are the intentions of the Austro-Hungarian Government as regards the Sarajevo outrage? Until now I have been unable to find this out, but my other colleagues are in a similar position. The password which has now been given here is not to tell anybody anything. The evening before last the Joint Ministers held a meeting. It has not been possible to learn anything about the object and the result of this session. The communiqué issued on the subject was brief and obscure." Count Tisza answered questions in the Hungarian Parliament, but his speech was not clear, "and I believe it was intentionally obscure." It was understood that the decision would be delayed until the result of the investigation into the murder was completed. In another letter on the same day M. Yovanovich says: "What steps will be taken? In what form? What demands will Austria-Hungary make of Serbia? I do not believe that to-day even the Ballplatz itself could answer these questions clearly and precisely. I am of opinion that its plans are now being laid, and that again Count Forgách is the moving spirit." But he adds that "after taking into consideration all that is being prepared and done" it appeared to him that Austria-Hungary would choose the second of the alternative courses. She would do this in the belief that she had the approval of Europe.

Why should she not profit by humiliating us, and, to a certain extent, justify the Friedjung and Agram trials? Besides, Austria-Hungary desires in this manner to justify in the eyes of her own people and of Europe the sharp and reactionary measures which she contemplates undertaking internally in order to suppress the Great Serbian propaganda and the Jugo-Slav idea. Finally, for the sake of her prestige Austria-Hungary must take some action in the belief that she will thus raise her prestige internally as well as externally.¹

Five days later he again writes:

It is very difficult, almost impossible, to discover here anything positive as to the real intentions of Austria-Hungary. The *mot d'ordre* is to maintain absolute secrecy about everything that is being done. Judging by the articles in our newspapers, Belgrade is taking

M. Yovanovich,
July 20.

¹ S. 25.

an optimistic view of the questions pending with Austria-Hungary. There is, however, no place for optimism. There is no doubt that Austria-Hungary is making preparations of a serious character. That which is chiefly to be feared, and is highly probable, is, that Austria is preparing for war against Serbia.¹

The anxiety was not confined to Serbia; there was throughout Europe an uneasy feeling based indeed, not on any actual knowledge of the intentions of Austria, but on the recognition that Serbia was the most dangerous point in Europe, and on an appreciation of the consequences which might result if Austria were to take this opportunity, as she well might, for bringing to a point the long-standing controversy with Russia over the political position of the Serbian kingdom. There was, indeed, every ground for anxiety. The Western Balkans were the meeting-point of two races and two civilisations, each championed by a great military Monarchy; it was a situation that must call for the greatest discretion, moderation, and even self-abnegation; and was this to be expected? On the one side was a small, ambitious, highly-excitabile nation, always smarting under what it considered the intolerable injury inflicted on it by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on the other side one of the most ancient and the proudest States on the Continent of Europe menaced, not only in its ambition for the future, but in the maintenance of its present establishment by a people whom they despised as one of inferior civilisation, and whose claims to be a rival they regarded as an unendurable insult.

To Europe the Austro-Hungarian Government maintained a silence as impenetrable as to Serbia. It was known that demands were to be made on Serbia; the nature of these demands in all detail were being constantly discussed, obviously on good information, in the Austrian and Hungarian papers, but to the other Powers not a word was said. There was a general feeling of sympathy with Austria, and it was recognised that demands must be made; the general opinion seems to have been that Count Berchtold himself desired "at the most, local action," but there was always an apprehension that the opportunity might be taken for raising questions of European

¹ S. 31.

importance. On July 2nd, the French Ambassador at Vienna wrote :

The crime of Sarajevo arouses the most acute resentment in Austrian military circles, and among all those who are not content to allow Serbia to maintain in the Balkans the position which she has acquired.

M. Dumaine,
July 2.

The investigation into the origin of the crime which it is desired to exact from the Government at Belgrade under conditions intolerable to their dignity would, in case of a refusal, furnish grounds of complaint which would admit of resort to military measures.¹

and a fortnight later :

Certain organs of the Vienna Press, discussing the military organisation of France and of Russia, represent these two countries as incapable of holding their own in European affairs ; this would ensure to the Dual Monarchy, supported by Germany, appreciable facilities for subjecting Serbia to any treatment which it might be pleased to impose. The *Militürische Rundschau* frankly admits it. "The moment is still favourable to us. If we do not decide for war, that war in which we shall have to engage at the latest in two or three years will be begun in far less propitious circumstances. At this moment the initiative rests with us : Russia is not ready, moral factors and right are on our side, as well as might. Since we shall have to accept the contest some day, let us provoke it at once. Our prestige, our position as a Great Power, our honour, are in question ; and yet more, for it would seem that our very existence is concerned—to be or not to be—which is in truth the great matter to-day."

M. Dumaine,
July 15.

Surpassing itself, the *Neue Freie Presse* of to-day reproaches Count Tisza for the moderation of his second speech, in which he said, "Our relations with Serbia require, however, to be made clear." These words rouse its indignation. For it, tranquillity and security can result only from a *war to the knife* against Pan-Serbism, and it is in the name of humanity that it demands the extermination of the cursed Serbian race.²

On June 20th an anticipation was sent by a French consular official, clearly very well informed :

From information furnished by a person specially well informed as to official news, it appears that the French Government would be wrong to have confidence in disseminators of optimism ; much

¹ F. 8.

² F. 12. I have not been able to verify these quotations.

will be demanded of Serbia; she will be required to dissolve several propagandist societies, she will be summoned to repress nationalism, to guard the frontier in co-operation with Austrian officials, to keep strict control over anti-Austrian tendencies in the schools; and it is a very difficult matter for a Government to consent to become in this way a policeman for a foreign Government. They foresee the subterfuges by which Serbia will doubtless wish to avoid giving a clear and direct reply; that is why a short interval will perhaps be fixed for her to declare whether she accepts or not. The tenor of the Note and its imperious tone almost certainly ensure that Belgrade will refuse. Then military operations will begin.

There is here, and equally at Berlin, a party which accepts the idea of a conflict of widespread dimensions—in other words, a conflagration. The leading idea is probably that it would be necessary to start before Russia has completed the great improvements of her army and railways, and before France has brought her military organisation to perfection. But on this point there is no unanimity in high circles: Count Berchtold and the diplomatists desire at the most localised operations against Serbia. But everything must be regarded as possible.¹

On July 22nd M. Dumaine again writes:

Nothing is known as to the decision which Count Berchtold who is prolonging his stay at Ischl, is trying to obtain from the Emperor. The intention of proceeding against Serbia with the greatest severity, of having done with her, of “treating her like another Poland,” is attributed to the Government. Eight army corps are said to be ready to start on the campaign, but M. Tisza, who is very disturbed about the excitement in Croatia, is said to have intervened actively in order to exercise a moderating influence.

In any case it is believed that the *démarche* will be made at Belgrade this week. The requirements of the Austro-Hungarian Government with regard to the punishment of the outrage, and to guarantees of control and police supervision, seem to be acceptable to the dignity of the Serbians; M. Yovanovich believes they will be accepted. M. Pashitch wishes for a peaceful solution, but says that he is ready for a full resistance. He has confidence in the strength of the Serbian army; besides, he counts on the union of all the Slavs in the Monarchy to paralyse the effort directed against his country.

Unless people are absolutely blinded, it must be recognised here that a violent blow has every chance of being fatal both to the Austro-Hungarian army and to the cohesion of the nationalities

¹ F. 14.

governed by the Emperor, which has already been so much compromised.

Herr von Tschirschky, the German Ambassador, is showing himself a supporter of violent measures, while at the same time he is willing to let it be understood that the Imperial Chancery would not be in entire agreement with him on this point. The Russian Ambassador, who left yesterday for the country in consequence of reassuring explanations made to him at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has confided to me that his Government will not raise any objection to steps directed towards the punishment of the guilty and the dissolution of the societies which are notoriously revolutionary, but could not accept requirements which would humiliate Serbian national feeling.¹

V

In this way a month passed. It was almost precisely four weeks after the murder that, at six o'clock on Thursday evening, July 23rd, Freiherr von Giesl, the Austrian Minister at Belgrade, delivered to the Serbian Government a formal Note containing the Austrian demands.

They were such as to exceed the worst anticipations that had been formed by the Serbian Government or foreign diplomatists. M. Yovanovich's forecast and the warnings sent to the French Government were amply justified. The Austrian Government did not content themselves with asking for the punishment of the murderers and the suppression of the conspiracies; what they demanded was nothing less than a complete change in the whole political aspect of the Serbian Government and nation, and in order to secure this they required what amounted in effect to a control by the Austrian Government of the internal administration of Serbia.

In the Austrian Note the murder of the Archduke takes quite a subordinate place. It begins by rehearsing the agreement of March 31, 1909, and is based on the accusation that the Serbians had failed to comply with this undertaking. From their first words it is apparent that we have here to do not with a question of police supervision over criminal conspiracies, but a movement in the realms of high policy. It contained in all eleven different requirements, and of these only four arose out of, or had to do with, the murder of the Archduke.

¹ F. 18.

The demands are, first that the Serbian Government should publish an official statement, the terms of which are verbally dictated, expressing their disapproval of the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary; and regretting that Serbian officials have taken part in this propaganda and thus compromised the good neighbourly relations to which they were solemnly pledged by their declaration of March 31, 1909.

This would have, of course, no practical effect except to publish to all the world the humiliation of the Serbian Government.

There then follow ten requirements; of these the first five are concerned with the suppression of the political agitation which had been carried on by the Press and the secret societies. They include the suppression of any publication inciting to hatred and contempt of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the dissolution of the *Narodna Odbrana* and other similar societies, control over education, the schools and the teachers. In addition to this they are required to dismiss all officers and officials "guilty of propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy whose names and deeds the Austro-Hungarian Government reserve to themselves the right of communicating," and they are required to accept the co-operation of the Austrian police in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the Monarchy.

This must mean that the Serbian Government would cease to have the responsible control over their own territory. If they accepted, they would bind themselves without appeal to dismiss from the service of the Crown a large number of public servants simply because of their political opinions. The co-operation of the Austrian police would place the reputation, the freedom, perhaps the life of every Serbian who was obnoxious to the Austrian Government, in jeopardy. Even if this might have been granted in some cases to other States, the character of the Austrian police, especially in dealing with political matters, and the offences which had been proved against them in recent trials in Austria, were of such a kind that to accept this demand in so vague a form would have been to open the door to a general proscription.

It was not the first time that the Austrian Government had attempted by similar measures to suppress a political agitation inconvenient to itself in the territory of other States. Had

these proposals been accepted and carried through, the situation in Serbia would have been not dissimilar to that which existed throughout Germany after what are called the Carlsbad Decrees. There again a common system of police and a strict censorship of the Press was established throughout the whole of Germany; all societies which had a patriotic aim, every association or publication which in its title or in its action, whether directly or indirectly, suggested that there was a German nation, or which encouraged the association of members of the various States into which Germany was divided, was ruthlessly suppressed; the co-operation of the Austrian and the Prussian Governments succeeded in imposing this system on all the German States; statesmen, generals, men of letters and learning, fell under the ban of the police; no name or services were too eminent to exempt them—Arndt, Stein, Blücher became the subjects of police supervision and suspicion. Hundreds of Germans were thrown into prison or expelled from the country, and for thirty years the whole development of the nation was stopped. This was possible because of the strength of the Austrian and Prussian armies, and this is the system which the Austrian Government, supported by Prussia, was proposing to impose upon the Serbs. So irrevocable in these States is the belief in police supervision as a sovereign remedy for all evils.

The next three clauses concern the arrest of the accomplices in the assassination and the prevention of traffic in arms and explosives, etc., across the frontier. These clauses require no comment except the sixth, which requires that "delegates of the Austro-Hungarian Government shall take part in the investigation as to the murder." The ninth asks for explanations as to "unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian officials who, notwithstanding their official position, have not hesitated to express themselves in interviews in terms of hostility to the Austro-Hungarian Government." The tenth requires that they shall notify the Austrian Government without delay as to the manner in which these requirements are carried out.

As to its contents, we may quote the words of Sir Edward Grey: "I had never before seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character." But the form and manner of the presentation were even more

alarming than the contents of the Note itself. We notice, first of all, that this demand was the first official communication which had been made by the Austrian Government to Serbia since the assassination of the Archduke, and in fact it appears, with one small exception, to have been the first complaint or remonstrance made against Serbian propaganda. Had it been desired to bring the matter to a peaceful issue, we should have expected that the attention of the Serbian Government would first have been called to such matters as seemed to afford a just ground for remonstrance, and that so extreme a measure as the presentation of this Note would have been reserved for the case that the Serbian Government refused to meet requests couched in different phraseology.

We must next notice the publicity; the Note was published within a few hours of its presentation to the Serbian Government. This had the effect of making known to the whole world that any redress offered by Serbia was made under threats of the gravest kind. It need not be pointed out how this would increase the difficulties of the Serbian Government; much that would have been possible had the negotiations been conducted in privacy was thereby rendered out of the question.

Again, it must be pointed out that although the demands made in the Note were based on a large number of statements as to fact, many of which clearly required documentary proof, it was not accompanied by any evidence of any kind except as to the single point of the accomplices in the murder of the Archduke. This is the more remarkable because, five days later, the Austrian Government circulated to the Governments of other States, a long and detailed statement as to the facts by which their demands were justified. Had this statement accompanied, or as would have been better, preceded the Note, the effect of it would have been very different.¹

¹ A full copy of this is printed in the Austro-Hungarian Red Book, No. 19, and also, though without the appendices, in the French Book, No. 175; in the German White Book there will be found also a shorter paraphrase of it. The full statement is no doubt the one referred to in E. 91, when Count Mensdorff offered Sir Edward Grey a statement of the case against Serbia. The document itself is lengthy; and obviously the statements contained in it are of very different value. None the less it affords sufficient evidence that there was a *prima facie*

Lastly, we notice the extremely short time-limit in which the answer was requested. This made it impossible for the Serbian Government to take the advice of other Powers; it made impossible any form of compromise, and in fact the limit was so short that it did not give even sufficient time to consider in detail the individual points raised and the answer that should be given.

The best comment on this is that of Sir E. Grey:

But, when Count Mensdorff told me that he supposed there would be something in the nature of a time-limit, which was in effect akin to an ultimatum, I said that I regretted this very much. To begin with a time-limit might inflame opinion in Russia, and it would make it difficult, if not impossible, to give more time, even if after a few days it appeared that by giving more time there would be a prospect of securing a peaceful settlement and getting a satisfactory reply from Serbia. I admitted that, if there was no time-limit, the proceedings might be unduly protracted, but I urged that a time-limit could always be introduced afterwards; that, if the demands were made without a time-limit in the first instance, Russian public opinion might be less excited, after a week it might have cooled down, and if the Austrian case was very strong it might be apparent that the Russian Government would be in a position to use their influence in favour of a satisfactory reply from Serbia. A time-limit was generally a thing to be used only in the last resort, after other means had been tried and failed.¹

Sir E. Grey,
July 22.

If we consider the Note as a whole and all the circumstances, it is a fair conclusion that the demands were drawn up with the deliberate object of making them such that they could not be at once and unconditionally accepted. They were not intended as a means of getting reparation, but as an excuse for going to war, for occupying Serbia and establishing police and military control over that country.

That this is no unfair interpretation may be judged from the fact that it was the interpretation given to the Note in Austria itself. The ultimatum was hailed with delight by the Austrian and especially by the Hungarian Press just for the reason that it case for investigation as to the conduct of the Serbian Government and Serbian officials in regard to the anti-Austrian propaganda. If thoroughly sifted and examined it would afford useful material on which an impartial consideration might have been based.

¹ E. 5.

clearly could not be accepted, and would therefore lead to war. "Call it what you will, it is the last, the very last word of the diplomatists. / After this the diplomatist vanishes from the scene, and his place is taken by the soldier." ¹

If we test it by the alternative suggested by M. Yovanovich it is inspired not by the desire to deal with the crime and by the demand for Serbian co-operation in the punishment of the accomplices and the prevention of similar acts in the future ; it went far beyond this ; it was a definite move to force the Serbian nation to alter the whole current of national thought and compel the Serbian Government to assist in this.

But indeed the Austrian Government themselves have given us a clear indication as to the interpretation to be placed on this document. In their own Red Book, immediately preceding it, is a despatch from Freiherr von Giesl, in which, after giving a picture of the political situation in Serbia, he concludes :

I have allowed myself to trespass too long on the patience of Your Excellency, not because I thought that in what I have said could tell you anything new, but because I considered this picture led up to a conclusion which forces itself upon me that a reckoning with Serbia, a war for the position of the Monarchy as a Great Power, even for its existence as such, cannot be permanently avoided.

Freiherr
von Giesl,
July 21.

If we delay in clearing up our relations to Serbia, we shall share the responsibility for the difficulties and the unfavourable situation in any future war which must, however, sooner or later be carried through.

For any observer on the spot, and the representative of Austro-Hungarian interests in Serbia, the question takes the form that we cannot any longer put up with any further injury to our prestige.

Should we therefore be determined to put forward far-reaching requirements joined to effective control—for this alone could clear the Augean stable of Great-Serbian intrigues—then all possible consequences must be considered, and from the beginning there must be a strong and firm determination to carry through the matter to the end.

Half means, the presentation of demands, long discussions to end only in an unsound compromise would be the hardest blow which could be directed against Austria-Hungary's reputation in Serbia and her position in Europe.²

It will not be unfair to believe that this despatch had been

¹ *Pester Lloyd*, July 25th.

² A. 6.

written to order, and to see in it the clearest statement of the wishes of the Austrian Government. "Effective control" to be obtained by a war, and the rejection of any compromise—this was their programme.¹

The real criticism of the Note seems to be that it confused, and intentionally confused, two different things—a political agitation and a criminal conspiracy. There was ample evidence that there was a conspiracy conducted by secret societies both in Serbia and in Austria-Hungary. The Austrian Government was clearly justified in requiring the Serbian Government to take the strictest measures in order to suppress this conspiracy, and with this object they were clearly bound to present to the Serbian Government such evidence as they had that the crime of Sarajevo, and other similar crimes, were partly the work of accomplices acting from Serbian territory. In order that these crimes might be suppressed and there should be proper guarantees for the future, close co-operation between the police of the two countries was clearly necessary. This was never denied nor disputed by any one; the Austrian Government complained that the Serbian Government had been remiss; but they themselves seem also to have been remiss in communicating the evidence to and asking for the assistance of the Serbian police. If, however, the Note had been confined to this point no difficulty would have resulted, and if the Serbians had not given willing and cordial co-operation the complaint against them would have been fully justified.

Unfortunately a considerable portion of the Note was occupied with matters of a very much more delicate nature; the political agitation hostile to Austria was of a kind which could not easily be dealt with by police measures; the origins of it are to be found in the strained relations between the two countries, for which the policy of Austria was certainly as much to blame as that of Serbia. There is no evidence that the Serbian Government had themselves fostered or even approved of this agitation, which indeed was probably at this time inconvenient to them; for the

¹ See also the account of M. Yovanovich in S. 52. "On that day I realised that an armed conflict between Serbia and the Dual Monarchy was inevitable, even should Serbia accept all the demands contained in the Austro-Hungarian Note, from the first to the last. The attitude of the people in the streets towards our Legation was such that I expected even personal attacks upon the members of the staff."

last thing that they desired was the immediate outbreak of a new war. It was, however, impossible for them to use the police to suppress this agitation in the same way in which they might use them to suppress the conspiracies. It was to this agitation that the greater part of the Austrian Note applied, and it was this which made it impossible either for the Serbian Government to accept it or for the friendly Powers to advise them to do so.

Whatever the faults they had committed, we cannot refuse our sympathy to the Serbians in the position in which they were now placed. They were confronted by a terrible alternative; to accept the demands would have been to acquiesce in the subjection of their country to Austria, to refuse them would involve an immediate attack from a Power whom they could not hope to resist. They were in no state to venture on so great a war; exhausted by two recent campaigns, fully occupied in the organisation of the newly acquired provinces, their army was unprepared—without arms, without ammunition, without money. That the answer must be refusal was indeed never doubted for a moment.

The Ministers who were away had only less than two days in which to decide on their action. In this dilemma the Crown Prince addressed to Russia, the Protector of Serbia, a telegram laying their difficulties before the Czar, and appealing to him for help:

The Austro-Hungarian Government yesterday evening presented to the Serbian Government a Note respecting the outrage at Sarajevo. Serbia, aware of her international obligations, has declared, ever since the horrible crime was committed, that she condemned it, and that she was ready to open an inquiry in Serbia if the complicity of certain of her subjects were proved at the trial instituted by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. The demands contained in the Austro-Hungarian Note are, however, unnecessarily humiliating for Serbia, and incompatible with her dignity as an independent State. For instance, we are peremptorily called upon to insert a declaration by the Government in the Official Journal, and for an order from the Sovereign to the army, in which we are to check the spirit of hostility towards Austria and to blame ourselves for criminal weakness as regards our treacherous intrigues. We are further required to admit Austro-Hungarian officials into Serbia to take part with our officials at the trial and to superintend the carrying out of the other conditions laid down in the Note. We are required to accept these demands in their entirety within forty-eight hours,

H.R.H. Prince
Regent of
Serbia, July 24.

failing which the Austro-Hungarian Legation will leave Belgrade. We are prepared to accept those of the Austro-Hungarian conditions which are compatible with the position of an independent State, as well as those to which Your Majesty may advise us to agree, and all those persons whose complicity in the crime may be proved will be severely punished by us. Certain of the demands could not be carried out without changes in our legislation, which would need time. We have been allowed too short a time-limit. We may be attacked at the expiration of the time-limit by the Austro-Hungarian army which is concentrating upon our frontier. We are unable to defend ourselves, and we beg Your Majesty to come to our aid as soon as possible. The much-appreciated goodwill which Your Majesty has so often shown towards us inspires us with the firm belief that once again our appeal to your noble Slav heart will not pass unheeded.

At this critical moment I echo the feelings of the Serbian people in praying Your Majesty to be pleased to interest yourself in the fate of the Kingdom of Serbia.¹

VI

But if the Note was an ultimatum to Serbia, it was also an ultimatum to Europe. At one blow it overthrew the laborious work of the preceding year; it aroused in the acutest form the slumbering opposition of Russia and Austria; it undermined the mutual confidence on which international relations were based. The foundation was destroyed; within forty-eight hours the building was tottering to its fall, and within a week it had collapsed.

This aspect of the affair was at once made the text of a most serious warning and remonstrance addressed by Sir E. Grey to Count Mensdorff, when on Thursday he came to acquaint him with the contents of the Note:

I said that I would not comment upon or criticise what Count Mensdorff had told me this afternoon, but I could not help dwelling upon the awful consequences involved in the situation. Great apprehension had been expressed to me, not specially by M. Cambon and Count Benckendorff, but also by others, as to what might happen, and it had been represented to me that it would be very desirable that those who had influence in St. Petersburg should use it on behalf of patience and moderation. I had

Sir E. Grey,
July 23.

¹ R. 6,

replied that the amount of influence that could be used in this sense would depend upon how reasonable were the Austrian demands and how strong the justification that Austria might have discovered for making her demands. The possible consequences of the present situation were terrible. If as many as four Great Powers of Europe—let us say, Austria, France, Russia, and Germany—were engaged in war, it seemed to me that it must involve the expenditure of so vast a sum of money, and such an interference with trade, that a war would be accompanied or followed by a complete collapse of European credit and industry. In these days, in great industrial States, this would mean a state of things worse than that of 1848, and, irrespective of who were victors in the war, many things might be completely swept away.

Count Mensdorff did not demur to this statement of the possible consequences of the present situation, but he said that all would depend upon Russia.

I made the remark that, in a time of difficulties such as this, it was just as true to say that it required two to keep the peace as it was to say, ordinarily, that it took two to make a quarrel. I hoped very much that, if there were difficulties, Austria and Russia would be able in the first instance to discuss them directly with each other.

Count Mensdorff said that he hoped this would be possible, but he was under the impression that the attitude in St. Petersburg had not been very favourable recently.¹

Next morning the text was communicated officially to the Courts of Europe, and was accompanied by an explanatory memorandum sent for their guidance to the Austrian representatives. In this the crimes of the Serbian Press and societies are recapitulated, and it is again stated that against this provocation the Serbian Government "did not consider themselves obliged to take the slightest steps." Stress is laid on the territorial disinterestedness of Austria-Hungary, the benevolent attitude that she had observed, and the patience with which she had suffered the provocation to which she had been subjected.²

In a separate Note to Count Mensdorff, Count Berchtold says that "England might among the Entente Powers be most easily led to form an impartial judgment on the step we are to-day taking in Belgrade," and instructs him to point out:

The requirements which we demand that Serbia should fulfil, and which indeed contain nothing which is not a matter of course in the intercourse between States which are to live in peace and

¹ E. 3.

² A. 8.

friendship, cannot be made the subject of negotiations and compromise; and in regard to our economic interests, we cannot take the risk of a method of political action by which it would be open to Serbia, according to her pleasure, to prolong this crisis which has arisen.¹

The comments of Sir Edward Grey are contained in the account of his conversation with Count Mensdorff:

Note addressed to Serbia, together with an explanation of the reasons leading up to it, has been communicated to me by Count Mensdorff.

Sir E. Grey,
July 24.

In the ensuing conversation with His Excellency, I remarked that it seemed to me a matter for great regret that a time-limit, and such a short one at that, had been insisted upon at this stage of the proceedings. The murder of the Archduke and some of the circumstances respecting Serbia quoted in the Note aroused sympathy with Austria, as was but natural, but at the same time I had never before seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character. Demand No. 5 would be hardly consistent with the maintenance of Serbia's independent sovereignty if it were to mean, as it seemed that it might, that Austria-Hungary was to be invested with a right to appoint officials who would have authority within the frontiers of Serbia.

I added that I felt great apprehension, and that I should concern myself with the matter simply and solely from the point of view of the peace of Europe. The merits of the dispute between Austria and Serbia were not the concern of His Majesty's Government, and such comments as I had made above were not made in order to discuss those merits.

I ended by saying that doubtless we should enter into an exchange of views with other Powers, and that I must await their views as to what could be done to mitigate the difficulties of the situation.

Count Mensdorff replied that the present situation might never have arisen if Serbia had held out a hand after the murder of the Archduke; Serbia had, however, shown no sign of sympathy or help, though some weeks had already elapsed since the murder; a time-limit, said His Excellency, was essential, owing to the procrastination on Serbia's part.

I said that if Serbia had procrastinated in replying, a time-limit could have been introduced later; but, as things now stood, the terms of the Serbian reply had been dictated by Austria, who had not been content to limit herself to a demand for a reply within a limit of forty-eight hours from its presentation.²

¹ A. 9.

² E. 5. For Count Mensdorff's account, see A. 10.

With this should be compared the comment of the French Government :

On visiting the Acting Political Director immediately after making this communication, Count Szécsen, without any observations, informed him that the Note had been presented. M. Berthelot, on my instructions, confined himself to pointing out to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador the feeling of anxiety which had been aroused by the information available this morning as to the contents of the Austrian Note, and the painful feeling which could not fail to be aroused in French public opinion by the time chosen for so categorical a *démarche* with so short a time-limit; that is to say, a time when the President of the Republic and the President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic had left St. Petersburg and were at sea, and consequently were not able to exert, in agreement with those Powers which were not directly interested, that soothing influence on Serbia and Austria which was so desirable in the interest of general peace.¹

If we are to estimate the effect that it produced throughout Europe, we must remember the secrecy with which it had been prepared. No information had been given to any of the other Governments until the Note itself was delivered, and as a matter of fact it was published in the newspapers before the Governments of France, England, or Russia received a copy. Even Italy, an ally of Austria, had had no warning or previous information. As Sir Maurice de Bunsen says in a despatch written some weeks afterwards :

The delivery at Belgrade on the 23rd of July of the Austrian Note to Serbia was preceded by a period of absolute silence at the Ballplatz. Except Herr von Tschirschky, who must have been aware of the tenor, if not of the actual words of the Note, none of my colleagues were allowed to see through the veil. On the 22nd and 23rd of July, M. Dumaine, French Ambassador, had long interviews with Baron Macchio, one of the Under-Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, by whom he was left under the impression that the words of warning he had been instructed to speak to the Austro-Hungarian Government had not been unavailing, and that the Note which was being drawn up would be found to contain nothing with which a self-respecting State need hesitate to comply. At the

M. Bienvenu-Martin, July 24.
Sir M. de Bunsen, September 1.

¹ F. 25.

second of these interviews he was not even informed that the Note was at that very moment being presented at Belgrade, or that it would be published in Vienna on the following morning. Count Forgách, the other Under-Secretary of State, had indeed been good enough to confide to me on the same day the true character of the Note, and the fact of its presentation about the time we were speaking.

So little had the Russian Ambassador been made aware of what was preparing that he actually left Vienna on a fortnight's leave of absence about the 20th of July. He had only been absent a few days when events compelled him to return. It might have been supposed that Duke Avarna, Ambassador of the allied Italian Kingdom, which was bound to be so closely affected by fresh complications in the Balkans, would have been taken fully into the confidence of Count Berchtold during this critical time. In point of fact His Excellency was left completely in the dark. As for myself, no indication was given me by Count Berchtold of the impending storm, and it was from a private source that I received on the 15th of July the forecast of what was about to happen which I telegraphed to you the following day. It is true that during all this time the *Neue Freie Presse* and other leading Viennese newspapers were using language which pointed unmistakably to war with Serbia. The official *Fremdenblatt*, however, was more cautious, and till the Note was published the prevailing opinion among my colleagues was that Austria would shrink from courses calculated to involve her in grave European complications.¹

The action of Austria seems to require no explanation. Her trouble with Serbia was of old standing; it affected matters of vital importance to the policy of the future of the Monarchy. They had long been waiting an opportunity of bringing matters to an issue. Was it likely that they would refuse to avail themselves of so unequalled an opportunity? There is nothing surprising if they proposed to use it to the utmost. They were playing for high stakes. Austria had (let us suppose by chance) got very good cards; she proposed to use them for all they were worth. No one who knows her diplomatic history would expect her to show restraint or moderation in the use of the advantage put into her hands. That she should make her demands as strong as possible might be assumed. If Serbia accepted them—good; if not, they would go to war, and the demands were so made that war should be almost inevitable, and it would go hard

¹ E. 161. This is corroborated by the account given by M. Yovanovich, see S. 52.

with them if they could not manage the war so as to permanently strengthen their position. But as to Russia, did they believe, did they expect, did they desire that they would be involved in a war with Russia? This we shall have to consider at a later stage. It may, however, even now be suggested that their intention was to press on as quickly as possible, to anticipate any Russian protest, to gain all the advantages they could, and then if the Russian protest became serious, there would always be time at the last moment to give way.

CHAPTER II

GERMANY

WE must now turn to a consideration of German policy. In its original form the problem had been one for Austria-Hungary alone, but as was soon to be seen the action of Germany was to be of more importance than that of Austria itself, for on this, and on this alone, it depended whether the question should remain a local one, or whether it would develop into a great European conflict.

I

There had been a time when a controversy between Austria and Russia on a Balkan question would at the worst have resulted in a local war between these two Powers—a war which probably would not have been one of life and death, but would have been a limited trial of strength, and have come to an end as soon as the first decision on the field of battle had been made—a war of the old kind which, in the former days of Europe, had been so often waged, before the teaching of Clausewitz had perverted statesmen and soldiers to the belief that there was no more room for a local and partial war, but that every conflict must aim directly at the destruction of the antagonist.

The situation since the acquisition of Bosnia and Herzegovina had become such that a war of this kind might be looked upon as very probable. If left to themselves, matters would probably have taken a course somewhat similar to that of the Italian campaign of 1848 or of 1859. In the latter year Austria attacked Piedmont as she now attacked Serbia; she had similar grounds for doing so. Piedmont, however, was able to depend on the help of Napoleon. Austria on her side appealed for help to Germany; but notwithstanding the outcry in large sections of

the Press and among the people that Germans ought to stand by one another, Prussia was strong enough to resist the appeal. She refused the help demanded, and the conflict was limited to the armies of France and Austria. Prussia, however, and with Prussia went Germany, did not remain entirely inactive. She armed and waited. In this way she was able to exercise a decisive influence. After the first battles Napoleon became aware that if he pressed his success too far he would be exposed to a demonstration by the Prussian armies on the Rhine. He held his hand, he stopped his armies in the middle of their victorious career, and peace was made. The work he had undertaken was not completed, but the essential had been done, and Italy was saved.

So it might have been now had Germany wished it.

We may acknowledge that Austria had real ground for complaint; all the more was it incumbent upon Germany to use the privileged position which she held as an ally to restrain Austria, and herself to avoid being entangled in a war with Russia. This she could well have done: an alliance of this kind may always serve to exercise a moderating influence on the two parties to it; practically it makes it impossible for either of them to take an aggressive step which would lead to war, except with the consent of the other. All German statesmen had foreseen that the alliance might involve a great danger in that it might entangle Germany in the Balkan troubles of Austria. Bismarck, always so cautious, especially where Russia was concerned, had provided against this by entering into a special arrangement with Russia to insure her against any unprovoked aggressive action by Austria. The danger he had foreseen had now arisen, but there was no longer at the head of Germany a statesman with his wisdom and experience. That she could have restrained Austria events of the preceding year showed; that she would have done so we may well believe, had it not been that she herself desired a definite settling of accounts with Russia.

During recent years there had been a great change in Germany's political position. She was no longer a disinterested party in a Balkan dispute. She had her own plans, the success of which depended on the arrangement which might be made in the Balkans, and there was much in the Treaty of Bucharest

which was doubtless inconvenient to her. She had great projects for the development of Mesopotamia, which depended on the maintenance of free communication through Turkey and Bulgaria. Here, for the first time, was introduced a definite and real ground for difference with Russia. She could no longer, as in earlier days, be indifferent to the extension of Russian influence; even the establishment of a Balkan League strong enough to be self-dependent, and determined to pursue its own commercial policy might be a fatal impediment to her plans.

No expression has been so frequently used during recent years by German statesmen as "the free development of Germany." But the free development as understood by them was not only the development of her resources at home, but the acquisition of territory and the extension of influence in all parts of the world. An ambitious policy of this kind could not be pursued without raising frequent causes of acute controversy with other States whose interests and possessions might be menaced, and in this case the free development of Germany had brought about a possible conflict of interests with Russia. Hitherto that had been absent. There had for many years been a strong national antagonism between the two States which were the champions of the Slav and Teutonic races. Of real and urgent causes of political difference there was none. It would have been different had Russia pursued a forward and aggressive policy in the Baltic, had she attempted to interfere with the independence or integrity of the Scandinavian kingdoms; then indeed Germany would rightly have come forward as their protector. Of this there is no suggestion; it might be talked of as a vague and possible danger in the future.

Of one thing we may be sure, that Germany would not consent to the proposed Austrian step unless it was clearly for her own interest to do so. She was well able to restrain Austria if she wished; a word from her and a veto would be placed on any step that Austria proposed. In the alliance she was the predominant partner, and she had no scruples or reluctance to exercise with its full force the influence to which her great wealth and military power gave her the right.

Before recording what she did, we must note that during the last twelve months an important change had taken place in

the general European situation—a change none the less important because it was of a military character. In 1913 the German Government were not satisfied with the military strength at their disposal. They had, firstly, been disturbed by the increase and reorganisation of the Russian army which had been in progress since the Japanese war, and secondly they had been surprised by the collapse of the Turkish army and the unexpected rise of the Balkan States. In these ways there had been introduced a new and unforeseen factor into the relative strength of the two alliances, and this was probably sufficiently important to make them look with disfavour on a general European war. In consequence, during the spring of 1913 a new Army Bill had been introduced which added considerably to the strength of the German forces, and in addition a special grant of fifty million pounds had been voted for the completion of equipment. By the summer of 1914 these two measures would have had time to be carried out into practical operation, and in consequence the German army would be more ready and better equipped for a great war than it was during the preceding year. In addition to that, the completion of the Kiel Canal, which took place at the end of June, would greatly increase German power by sea.

There were, moreover, certain elements in the general situation which might be interpreted as showing that if a war was to come it would in the summer of 1914 be fought under unusually favourable conditions. There were signs of serious demoralisation in France; the reorganisation of the Russian army was not completed, and there were grave labour troubles in St. Petersburg; finally, it looked as though England would be so much hampered by the Irish difficulty that she would not be free to take any prominent part in Continental affairs.

These considerations are no evidence that the German Government wanted war. They are, however, a true cause why, though they had refused assent to a warlike policy in 1913, they might have adopted one in 1914.

We must also note the general attitude of the nation. In a country such as Germany, the Government cannot go to war unless it is assured of the vigorous support of the people. Now as to the state of German public opinion some things can be said with certainty. First of all, there was perhaps a small but

certainly a very active party who definitely desired war. This has since been denied, but the evidence is incontrovertible. By meetings, speeches, lectures, and writings they had attempted to convert the nation to this belief.¹ Then among a considerable proportion the feeling had been growing up that war was unavoidable, and if unavoidable then it was better that it should come as soon as possible. Moreover, the constant talk of war had accustomed to the idea many who would naturally have been averse from it: for men quickly become reconciled to an idea which is always in their minds. There were others who were deeply concerned by the growing materialism of the nation, and saw in war the only means of again arousing the people to sterner duties. Very widely spread was the belief that the nation had in its powers and abilities which justified a claim to a larger place in the world than that in fact enjoyed, and this belief had been sedulously nourished in the highest quarters.

The nation was undoubtedly going through a phase of great national exaltation. There was among them a desire to express themselves in great deeds. There was a longing for an opportunity for heroic action, an enormous fund of energy and patriotism ready at any time when the Government chose to call upon it; a great national self-consciousness, not necessarily directed against any one particular country, not necessarily desiring any special acquisition of territory or definite increase of power, but ready to be diverted in any direction which might suit the interests of the Government.²

All we can say is that the general condition of affairs was such as to make it possible that the rulers of Germany may have come to the conviction that war some time soon was inevitable, that if it was to come it had better come now, and that the situation was such that they could look on the result of any war with great

¹ See "The True Pastime," by Alexander Gray (Methuen & Co.), which contains an illuminating account of the agitation.

² I have deliberately put the case shortly and in the most moderate form. This is not the place to deal with it fully. There is very extensive literature on the subject; a valuable addition to it will be found in the despatches from M. Jules Cambon published in the French Yellow Book, which give the judgment of a very able and well-informed observer. Of course these despatches have not the same authority as those dealing with the diplomatic steps of the French and other Governments.

hopefulness. The army was prepared to the last man ; the fleet was in a state of high efficiency, and they could reasonably hope by rapid movements to crush France within a few weeks, and then to be able to turn the whole of their forces against Russia.

We must not underestimate the real dread of Russia which has always existed in Germany. It is indeed true that the presence of the Russian Empire with its immense but half-developed strength on the immediate eastern frontier is a great potential menace. It is conceivable that in the future the power of Russia might be used for an aggressive war against Germany. Under a great military ruler this danger might become a terrible one. The mere possibility of it is sufficient reason why the Germans should keep their military forces at a high level of strength and efficiency, and it is the historical explanation of much which we call German militarism. In particular the German people, and especially Prussians, who have never forgotten the Seven Years War, will always readily answer to an appeal based on the danger from Russia. But while we may acknowledge this, it is necessary also to put on record that there is not and there has not been in the past any evidence of a desire on the part of the Russian nation or the Russian Government for an attack of this nature. There is, indeed, and has long been a constant struggle in the East of Europe between the Slav and the Teuton, but this struggle seems in all cases to have had one common characteristic : it was not an attempt on the part of the Slavs to establish dominion over the Germans, but an attempt to free themselves from the dominion of the Teuton. Except in the Baltic provinces of Russia there is no place in which a large Germanic population is governed either by the Russians or by any other branch of the Slav race. There are innumerable places where a great Slav population is subjected to the Germans. In Posen, in Galicia, in the Bukovina, in all the southern districts of the Dual Monarchy, this is the case. Historically it is natural. The Germans were in the past a more highly civilised race, and they have brought order and civilisation into the broken remnants of the Slav peoples. Now the time has come when the Slavs claim that they shall enjoy their own civilisation, their own customs, their own religion, and that they shall be governed by men of their own race. The deep consciousness

of this appears to be the guiding force of Russian policy. The relation between the Slavs and the Germans now is similar to that which prevailed for two hundred years between the Germans and the French, and the Slavs are struggling for full self-expression just as the Germans had to struggle for it.

How to deal with this problem throws, indeed, a most difficult and serious responsibility upon German and Austrian statesmen. There is, however, clearly one great danger to be avoided, and that is that all the Slavonic peoples should come under the immediate sceptre of the Czar and be united in the autocratic Russian Empire. If there is, in truth, a danger to the liberties of Europe from Russia, the best safeguard against it is the creation of independent self-governing Slavonic States, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Ægean. Looking back, we may see that the irrevocable blunder was made when the Germanic Powers joined with Russia in the partition of Poland. Is it desirable that this blunder should be repeated? But this is the direction in which it appears that German and Austrian policy has always tended. The treatment of the Serbs, the scarcely veiled opposition to the creation of the Balkan Union show this. In both the German and the Austrian apologies we always find the point brought up that the Balkan Union was a menace to Austria. May we not rather say that the successful accomplishment of the work of this union would have been the best safeguard to the Germanic States of Central Europe, for it would have created ambitious independent nationalities who, if they had achieved their independence by the help of Russia, might have been relied upon in the future to defend this independence if necessary even against Russia?

The truth, indeed, is something very far from that which it is represented by German apologists to be. While Russia was using her influence to establish prosperous communities in the Balkans, Austria and Germany seem to have desired to keep the Balkan peoples weak, disorganised, antagonistic, in order that their weakness might give an opportunity for the spread of German influence and German commerce. It was a profound blunder; above all in this, that it might have given a dangerous opportunity for an aggressive Russian policy permanently to secure the subjection of these States to the Empire of the Czar.

II

During the period that elapsed between the murder and the delivery of the Austrian Note, the German Government preserved silence. The matter, indeed, was one that did not immediately concern them. They were not called on to make any official announcement. As early as July 4th Herr von Jagow said to the French Chargé d'Affaires:

that he hoped Serbia would satisfy the demands which Austria might have to make to her with regard to the investigation and the prosecution of the accomplices in the crime of Sarajevo. He added that he was confident that this would be the case because Serbia, if she acted in any other way, would have the opinion of the whole civilised world against her.

M. de Manneville, July 4.

The German Government do not then appear to share the anxiety which is shown by a part of the German Press as to possible tension in the relations between the Governments of Vienna and Belgrade, or at least they do not wish to seem to do so.¹

On the 19th of July there appeared in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* an article in which, for the first time, we find used the expression *localisation of the conflict*, of which we shall hear so much.

Two days later Herr von Jagow said that he was in complete ignorance of the proposed Austrian Note:

In confidence I may also inform Your Excellency that the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at the diplomatic audience to-day mentioned this subject to Herr von Jagow. He said that he supposed the German Government now had full knowledge of the Note prepared by Austria, and were therefore willing to give the assurance that the Austro-Serbian difficulties would be localised. The Secretary of State protested that he was in complete ignorance of the contents of that Note, and expressed himself in the same way to me. I could not help showing my astonishment at a statement which agreed so little with what circumstances lead one to expect.²

M. Jules Cambon, July 21.

¹ F. 9.

² F. 15.

M. Cambon adds :

I have also been assured that, from now on, the preliminary notices for mobilisation, the object of which is to place Germany in a kind of "attention" attitude in times of tension, have been sent out here to those classes which would receive them in similar circumstances. That is a measure to which the Germans, constituted as they are, can have recourse without indiscretion and without exciting the people. It is not a sensational measure, and is not necessarily followed by full mobilisation, as we have already seen, but it is none the less significant.

As to this latter observation, it is impossible at present to find out how much truth there was in it. It is pointed out below that not too much importance should be attached to unverified rumours of the military preparations. Germany was indeed so well prepared that special measures were not necessary.

The restraint of the German Government, and these statements that they had no concern in the impending step, did not prevent serious anxiety being felt throughout Europe, but for the moment nothing could be done. On the 24th M. Paul Cambon writes from London :

Count Benckendorff told me that Prince Lichnowsky, when he returned from leave about a month ago, had intimated that he held pessimistic views regarding the relations between St. Petersburg and Berlin. He had observed the uneasiness caused in this latter capital by the rumours of a naval entente between Russia and England, by the Czar's visit to Bucharest, and by the strengthening of the Russian army. Count Benckendorff had concluded from this that a war with Russia would be looked upon without disfavour in Germany.

The Under-Secretary of State has been struck, as all of us have been, by the anxious looks of Prince Lichnowsky since his return from Berlin.¹

On the 20th Sir Edward Grey saw Prince Lichnowsky and had some conversation with him :

I asked the German Ambassador to-day if he had any news of what was going on in Vienna with regard to Serbia. He said that he had not, but Austria was certainly going to take some step, and he regarded the situation as very uncomfortable.

Sir E. Grey,
July 20.

I said that I had not heard anything recently, except that Count Berchtold, in speaking to the Italian Ambassador in Vienna, had deprecated the suggestion that the situation was grave, but had said that it should be cleared up.

The German Ambassador said that it would be a very desirable thing if Russia could act as a mediator with regard to Serbia.

I said that I assumed that the Austrian Government would not do anything until they had first disclosed to the public their case against Serbia, founded presumably upon what they had discovered at the trial.

The Ambassador said that he certainly assumed that they would act upon some case that would be known.

I said that this would make it easier for others, such as Russia, to counsel moderation in Belgrade. In fact, the more Austria could keep her demand within reasonable limits, and the stronger the justification she could produce for making any demand, the more chance there would be of smoothing things over. I hated the idea of a war between any of the Great Powers, and that any of them should be dragged into a war by Serbia would be detestable.

The Ambassador agreed whole-heartedly in this sentiment.¹

The suggestion that Russia should act as mediator, coming as it did from the German Ambassador, is remarkable. Had it been adopted the whole difficulty would have been removed; this was all that Russia ever asked for. That Prince Lichnowsky should have made it, shows that he was not in the confidence of his Government; he had not been initiated into their secret plans.

III

As soon as the Note had been presented, the German Government issued identical instructions to the Ambassadors to the chief Powers, which they were to communicate to the Governments to which they were accredited. In this the position taken up by the Government was clearly explained.

It begins by shortly rehearsing the grounds for the Austrian action; the complaints are not limited to the part which the Serbian nation and Government are supposed to have had in the assassination of the Archduke, and they include a general indictment of the whole conduct of the Serbian nation and the Pan-Serb propaganda. It lays stress on the fact, that in view

¹ E. 1.

of the state of affairs, the action of the Austro-Hungarian Government and their demands as included in the Note of the 23rd are justifiable, and points out that if the Serbians refuse to accept Austria's demands, there is no course open to the Government except appeal to military measures. It ends by requiring the Ambassadors to give emphasis to the view that the affair is one which should be settled between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.¹

We anxiously desire the localisation of the conflict, because every intervention of another Power would, on account of the various alliances, precipitate incalculable consequences.

On this phrase "the localisation of the conflict" ² the whole controversy was to turn. What it meant in practice was that Austria and Germany held that there was no ground for the interference of Russia. Though Russia is not mentioned, the last words are a clear indication that any interference by her would be resisted, and the words "incalculable consequences" imply that it would be resisted even at the risk of war. This is the important point.

This document, which is merely an instruction to the Ambassadors as to the line which they were officially to take, naturally does not give us the grounds on which these instructions had been drawn up. We know from it the official attitude of the German Government, and the cause which their agents were instructed to maintain; we naturally desire information as to the real views and intentions of those of whom they were only the instruments.

We are fortunate in having a fuller exposition of the German attitude which was drawn up and published at a later date, when there was no longer the same need for reticence. We have, in fact, three such documents; first, a Note addressed to the Governments of Germany on July 28th; secondly, the official Memorandum presented to the Reichstag after the declaration of war; and, thirdly, what may be called the first draft of this,

¹ E. 9; G. 1.

² The phrase was constantly used during the period of the Balkan wars. Then it meant that none of the Great Powers should take part in the struggle; it was always understood that, as soon as any one of the Powers joined in, the struggle would cease to be "localised."

published as an official communication in the *North German Gazette* of August 1st.

In all these new light is thrown on the position. In all of them, the action of Austria is represented as being justified by, and as a direct challenge to, Russia's policy in the Balkans.

Russia, soon after the events brought about by the Turkish revolution of 1908, endeavoured to found a union of the Balkan States under Russian patronage and directed against the existence of Turkey. This union which succeeded in 1912 in driving out Turkey from a greater part of her European possessions, collapsed over the question of the distribution of spoils. The Russian policies were not dismayed over this failure. According to the idea of the Russian statesmen a new Balkan Union under Russian patronage should be called into existence, headed no longer against Turkey, now dislodged from the Balkans, but against the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It was the idea that Serbia should cede to Bulgaria those parts of Macedonia which it had received during the last Balkan war, in exchange for Bosnia and the Herzegovina which were to be taken from Austria. To oblige Bulgaria to fall in with this plan it was to be isolated, Roumania attached to Russia with the aid of French propaganda, and Serbia promised Bosnia and the Herzegovina.

Under these circumstances it was clear to Austria that it was not compatible with the dignity and the spirit of self-preservation of the Monarchy to view idly any longer this agitation across the border. The Imperial and Royal Government apprised Germany of this conception and asked for our opinion. With all our heart we were able to agree with our ally's estimate of the situation, and assure him that any action considered necessary to end the movement in Serbia directed against the conservation of the Monarchy would meet with our approval.

Here, then, it is clearly stated that the danger to Austria arises, not so much from the intrigues of Serbia, but from the support given to Serbia by Russia.

We were perfectly aware that a possible warlike attitude of Austria-Hungary against Serbia might bring Russia into the field, and that it might therefore involve us in a war, in accordance with our duty as allies. We could not, however, in these vital interests of Austria-Hungary, which were at stake, advise our ally to take a yielding attitude not compatible with his dignity, nor deny him our assistance in these trying days. We could do this all the less as our own interests were menaced through the continued Serb agitation. If the Serbs continued with the aid of Russia and France to menace the existence of Austria-Hungary, the gradual

collapse of Austria and the subjection of all the Slavs under one Russian sceptre would be the consequence, thus making untenable the position of the Teutonic race in Central Europe. A morally weakened Austria under the pressure of Russian Pan-Slavism would be no longer an ally on whom we could count and in whom we could have confidence, as we must be able to have, in view of the ever more menacing attitude of our eastern and western neighbours. We therefore permitted Austria a completely free hand in her action towards Serbia, but have not participated in her preparations.¹

There is much in this which seems ill-suited to a serious political document. These references to a vague and distant future, this talk of the subjection of all the Slavs under the Russian sceptre seem more in place in an amateur magazine article. If we were to take it seriously, how great is the want of political insight which it displays; if there were indeed a danger such as that suggested here, it would arise if the smaller Slav States were condemned to a prolonged period of weakness in which their very existence was endangered by Austrian ambition. It was the weakness and not the strength of the Balkan States which might perhaps afford a scope for Russian intrigues. The best barrier against Russian expansion would be the strengthening of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Roumania, and a strong Balkan League would make a permanent and efficient protection to the Austrian frontier.

But the point indeed is not whether or not these apprehensions were justified. If they were justified they might indeed be interpreted as affording a sound reason for forcing matters to a war with Russia. What they do show is that the risk of a European war had been carefully considered and deliberately incurred. There will from time to time arise in the history of any State, circumstances in which issues of such importance are raised that there seems no solution of the difficulty but by war. All these statements are to the effect that such a time had now come. We are given to understand that on the position of Serbia turned the whole question of the relations of Austria and Russia in the Balkans; that the policy of Russia was a permanent danger to German interests, and that in self-defence the two German States were driven to try conclusions with the great Slavonic Power. Whether this conclusion was a right one

¹ German White Book, pp. 1-3.

is a matter too big to be discussed here ; it is outside the scope of this book ; it will require a survey of the whole recent diplomatic history of Europe. What we are concerned to show is that by their own statement the German Government had determined that this great issue must now at last be raised and brought to a conclusive issue. But a war with Russia about Serbia must be a war between the two Alliances into which the Continent was divided ; the Germanic States, therefore, were not merely challenging Russia, they were challenging the Double Alliance to a trial of strength which would first be perhaps confined to diplomatic action, but in which they were prepared, if they could not succeed by diplomacy, to have recourse to arms.

Let it be granted that they were right in their reason ; let it be granted that the position of Germany was becoming intolerable, and that even a great war would be better than an unsatisfactory peace ; how is it possible to contend that this war, when it came, was not one which they had consciously and with full foresight invoked ?

In following the course of the negotiations with which the rest of this book is occupied, it will be necessary always to keep this in mind, and as we read the constant assertions that Germany strove for peace, that she did not desire war, we must always remember that the whole affair began with this challenge to Russia.

It is indeed true that they would doubtless have preferred a peaceful solution, provided that a peaceful solution could be obtained by the submission of Russia ; this is what in reality was meant by the phrase "localisation of the conflict." This meant, not that the matter was one in which Russia was not concerned, but that such diplomatic pressure should be used as to prevent Russia from establishing, as she would doubtless wish to do, her right to be consulted.

The phrase was indeed a most useful one. If carefully handled it might give the impression that if war ensued it was not Germany, but Russia, who was responsible ; by constant reiteration of this expression the belief would be spread abroad that it was the wanton action of Russia which expanded a local affair into a European controversy. The political importance of this is obvious. Germany could not

go to war unless the German nation was convinced that the war was a defensive one forced upon it by the aggression of Russia and carried on in self-defence, and for the German nation the phrase would be useful. For how could Russia interfere? She could only do so by a strong diplomatic protest which would eventually, if not attended to, have to be enforced by military measures, and then this could be made to appear as an unprovoked threat against Germany.

To bring about this result required considerable diplomatic skill. It was desirable that Germany should divest herself of all responsibility for Austrian action. There must be no hesitation in the confident assertions that danger from Russia need not be feared. The importance and scope of the problem must be minimised. At the same time it would be desirable to stop all proposals as to mediation, for the object of the whole move was to place before Russia the alternative of submission or resistance; mediation would prevent this; and friendly compromise would be failure; everything would continue as before, and Russian influence would not have been checked. Mediation, therefore, must be prevented, but this must be done in such a manner that it would not appear that Germany had brought the danger of war upon Europe.

And first it would be necessary to establish that in her proceedings against Serbia, Austria was acting entirely on her own responsibility; that Germany had no part in this, or responsibility. And so we find from the beginning constant assurances that the Note had been drawn up without consultation with her.

This attempt to evade responsibility for the Note is not of a kind to win our confidence.

Everything indeed depended upon the precise nature of the Austrian requirements. If they were reasonable, moderate, and carefully limited then it was probable that Russia would be unable, or would not consider it necessary, to interfere; if, on the other hand, they were unreasonable; if they went beyond what was necessary in order to secure the punishment of all those accessory to the murder; if they seemed to disclose the intention, not only of gaining a well-deserved redress for the offences of Serbia, but also of placing Serbia in such a position of humiliation that she would come completely under Austrian

influence, then Russia must interfere. Even if the Government would have preferred to avoid a conflict, the nation would not have acquiesced.

If, then, Germany wished to carry through the action in a peaceful way, it was incumbent on her to exercise such restraint upon Austria as to prevent any apprehension that the crushing of Serbia was the intention. According to their own account, the German Government deliberately avoided exercising this restraint; as they say (and the statement is constantly repeated during all the negotiations), "We permitted Austria a completely free hand in her preparations." Whether or not this is true, by giving Austria a free hand Germany undertook the full responsibility for all that Austria did, and pledged herself to support by arms the Austrian contention, in however extreme a form it might be placed. If Austrian claims were put in such a manner as to make it unavoidable that a general war would ensue, the German Government had equal responsibility for the unavoidable result.

The statement that Germany had no previous knowledge of the Austrian Note is constantly repeated; on July 25th Herr von Jagow told Sir Horace Rumbold "very earnestly, that though he had been accused of knowing all about the contents of the Note, he had in fact no such knowledge." Prince Lichnowsky also on the same day read Sir Edward Grey "a telegram from the German Foreign Office saying that his Government had not known beforehand and had no more than other Powers to do with the stiff terms of the Austrian Note to Serbia." It was the subject of a long and interesting conversation between Herr von Jagow and M. Cambon.

I asked the Secretary of State to-day, in the interview which I had with him, if it was correct, as announced in the newspapers, that Austria had presented a Note to the Powers on her dispute with Serbia; if he had received it; and what view he took of it.

M. Jules
Cambon, July 24.

Herr von Jagow answered me in the affirmative, adding that the Note was forcible, and that he approved it, the Serbian Government having for a long time past wearied the patience of Austria. Moreover, he considers this question to be a domestic one for Austria, and he hopes that it will be localised.

I then said to him that not having as yet received any instructions, the views which I wished to exchange with him were strictly

personal. Thereupon I asked him if the Berlin Cabinet had really been entirely ignorant of Austria's requirements before they were communicated to Belgrade, and as he told me that that was so, I showed him my surprise at seeing him thus undertake to support claims, of whose limit and scope he was ignorant.

Herr von Jagow interrupted me, and said, "It is only because we are having a personal conversation that I allow you to say that to me."

"Certainly," I replied, "but if Peter I humiliates himself, domestic trouble will probably break out in Serbia; that will open the door to fresh possibilities, and do you know where you will be led by Vienna?" I added that the language of the German newspapers was not the language of persons who were indifferent to, and unacquainted with, the question, but betokened an active support. Finally, I remarked that the shortness of the time-limit given to Serbia for submission would make an unpleasant impression in Europe.

Herr von Jagow answered that he quite expected a little excitement (*un peu d'émotion*) on the part of Serbia's friends, but that he was counting on their giving her wise advice.

"I have no doubt," I then said to him, "that Russia would endeavour to persuade the Cabinet of Belgrade to make acceptable concessions; but why not ask from one what is being asked from the other, and if reliance is being placed on advice being given at Belgrade, is it not also legitimate to rely on advice being given at Vienna from another quarter?"

The Secretary of State went so far as to say that that depended on circumstances; but immediately checked himself; he repeated that the difficulty must be localised. He asked me if I really thought the situation serious. "Certainly," I answered, "because if what is happening is the result of due reflection, I do not understand why all means of retreat have been cut off."

All the evidence shows that Germany is ready to support Austria's attitude with unusual energy. The weakness which her Austro-Hungarian ally has shown for some years past, has weakened the confidence that was placed in her here. She was found heavy to drag along. Mischievous legal proceedings, such as the Agram and the Friedjung affairs, brought odium on her police and covered them with ridicule. All that was asked of the police was that they should be strong; the conviction is that they were violent.

An article which appeared in the *Lokal Anzeiger* this evening shows also that at the German Chancery there exists a state of mind to which we in Paris are naturally not inclined to pay sufficient attention, I mean the feeling that monarchies must stand together (*sentiment de la solidarité monarchique*). I am convinced that great weight must be attached to this point of view in order to appreciate the attitude of the Emperor

William, whose impressionable nature must have been affected by the assassination of a prince whose guest he had been a few days previously.

It is not less striking to notice the pains with which Herr von Jagow, and all the officials placed under his orders, pretend to every one that they were ignorant of the scope of the Note sent by Austria to Serbia.¹

This statement remains as surprising to us now as it was to M. Cambon then. It is indeed difficult to believe that the German Government, or at least some of those finally responsible for the direction of German policy, had not seen the full text of the Austrian Note, and had not had an opportunity of criticising and correcting it. This does not necessarily apply to Herr von Jagow. He, after all, was not an independent and equal minister, but a departmental chief working under and responsible to the Chancellor; under the German constitution the Chancellor is the official head of all the Imperial Departments of State, and particularly is immediately responsible to the Emperor for the conduct of the foreign policy; the Secretary of State has not the same position as the Secretary for Foreign Affairs has in England. It is therefore quite possible that Herr von Jagow himself had not seen the Note in its final form. It does not follow from this that the heads of the Government had not done so. As a matter of fact, they certainly had been warned of the probable nature of the demands incorporated in it. This had been the subject of constant discussion in the Press for a week or more before the 23rd. Austrian newspapers had referred to the details of it obviously with good knowledge; the question whether or not, for instance, the Serbian Government should be required to dismiss certain officers in the army had been discussed, and if the German Government had wished to ensure that impossible requirements should not be incorporated, they certainly had the opportunity of making their opinion known. We may note also that Sir Maurice de Bunsen states on July 30th: "Although I am not able to verify it, I have private information that the German Ambassador knew the context of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia before it was despatched, and telegraphed it to the German Emperor. I know from the German Ambassador himself that he endorses every line of it." ²

¹ F. 30.

² E. 95.

There can indeed be little doubt that the German Government would not have given a free hand to Austria unless they had had some general knowledge of the nature and scope of the demands to be made ; what probably happened is that these were communicated, perhaps in an unofficial form, perhaps direct to the German Emperor, but that it was agreed that the final draft of the Note should not be officially communicated to the German Government in order that they might be able, without going outside the literal truth, to state that they had not seen the Note.¹

If the other explanation is the correct one, and if it is true that the German Government had given to the Austrians a completely free hand in the way in which they profess to have done, and had pledged their full support to a document of which

¹ In case any reader may think that this suggestion is too far fetched, it may be recalled that it is entirely in accordance with the procedure on the last occasion when Prussia went to war. The cause of the war of 1870 was that a Prussian prince was elected King of Spain, and accepted the throne. The French at once assumed that this was a Prussian intrigue. The Prussian Government, however, disclaimed any knowledge of it; the matter, they said, was one which concerned the King only in his family relations, and it had never come before the Government. This was for long believed. At length, after more than twenty years, the truth was disclosed. It was then found that the whole plan was originated by Bismarck. He had strongly pressed it on the King, and forced the Prince to accept because it was for the advantage of Prussia; and the consent of the King had been unwillingly extorted from him after a full council at which Bismarck and most of the ministers were present.

We are therefore justified in refusing to attach much importance to the denial that the German Government had knowledge of the Austrian Note.

There is in the French Book a despatch (No. 21), to the effect that the Bavarian Prime Minister had cognisance of the Note; it does not, however, seem necessarily to imply that he had seen it before it was officially despatched; all that it says is that the Bavarian Minister knew of it on July 23rd. This is not inconsistent with the hypothesis that a copy was sent, for their information, to the Bavarian Government at the same time that it was sent to Serbia. It was probably communicated to the Italian Government on the same day (see F. 51); all that this would mean would be that the Allies of Austria saw it a day before it was officially communicated to the other European Powers. It may be added that the Bavarian Government have officially contradicted the statement that it had been communicated to them in advance.

they had no knowledge; if they had deliberately placed the whole resources of the German nation at the disposal of another Power, and one notoriously apt to make the most immoderate demands; if they had, without careful scrutiny and investigation, pledged themselves to take part in a great European war by which the welfare of the whole of Europe, and in a special way the prosperity of the German nation itself, would be endangered, without the most careful previous consideration of the claims they were supporting, then indeed their action appears to deserve the most severe reprobation, not only on the part of the other nations of Europe, but in particular on the part of the German nation, whose future they were imperilling. What greater crime could the Government of a Great Power commit against its own subjects than in this manner to involve them in so appalling a calamity?

It is noteworthy that this aspect of things was recognised in Germany. The first effect on public opinion was not altogether favourable. Strong protests were raised amongst some of the independent papers:

Is it a Note? No. It is an ultimatum, and an ultimatum of the sharpest form. Austria requires an answer within 24 [*sic*] hours. The answer? No. Then subjection, complete humiliation of Serbia. . . . Here one has an evidence of energy, the effect of which is alarming. The Note indeed contains the most extreme demands which one can make on a Government. No one says this sort of thing unless they are determined for war under any circumstances.—*Post*, July 26th.

The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum is nothing but a pretext for war, and this time a dangerous one. As it seems, we are on the verge of an Austro-Serbian war. . . . It is a scandal if the Government of the Empire had not required that demands of this kind should be submitted to it beforehand. Our sole duty now is to declare we are under no obligation to undertake war for the aggressive policy of the Hapsburgs.—*Rheinisch-Westphälische Zeitung*, July 24th.

These protests did not last long. With the exception of the Socialists, the Press and the public quickly accepted the view put before them by the Government, and in Berlin, Munich, and other large towns noisy demonstrations were held and public opinion was quickly mobilised against Serbia and Russia.

Throughout the afternoon there has been a persistent rumour that Serbia had submitted to the Austrian demands. This evening the newspapers published extra editions which announce a rupture at Belgrade, and the departure of the Austro-Hungarian Minister.

M. Cambon,
July 25.

The correspondent of the *Agence Havas* at the Wilhelmstrasse has just received confirmation of this rumour. Large crowds consisting of several hundred persons are collecting here before the newspaper offices, and a demonstration of numbers of young people has just passed through the Pariserplatz shouting cries of "Hurrah" for Germany, and singing patriotic songs. The demonstrators are visiting the *Siegessäule*, the Austrian and then the Italian Embassy. It is a significant outburst of chauvinism.

A German whom I saw this evening confessed to me that it had been feared here that Serbia would accept the whole Austrian Note, reserving to herself the right to discuss the manner in which effect should be given to it, in order to gain time and to allow the efforts of the Powers to develop effectively before the rupture.

In financial circles measures are already being taken to meet every eventuality, for no means of averting the crisis is seen, in view of the determined support which Germany is giving to Austria.

I, for my part, see in England the only Power which might be listened to at Berlin.

Whatever happens, Paris, St. Petersburg, and London will not succeed in maintaining peace with dignity unless they show a firm and absolutely united front.¹

M. Cambon, if we are to judge by the accounts in the German Press, underestimated the size and importance of these demonstrations. The *Berliner Tageblatt* speaks of an organised procession of many thousands which passed through the chief streets of Berlin singing patriotic songs. "In front marched a man bearing a black, white, and red flag. Incessant cheers for Germany and Austria arose among the crowd, which to a great extent consisted of the educated classes. One constantly heard the cry 'Down with Serbia.' The police were completely powerless in the presence of the great mass of people." "Between 12 and 1 to-night a great crowd assembled in front of the Russian Embassy. Cheers and hisses arose from them, and there were numerous cries of 'Down with Russia,' 'Hurrah for Austria,' 'Down with Serbia.'" These demonstrations continued for two or three days before they could be finally sup-

¹ F. 47.

pressed by the police. Elsewhere, especially in Munich, similar events took place. The rapidity with which they arose, the immediate effect of the crisis on public opinion, the instantaneous collapse of the Stock Exchange, are all remarkable evidence of the interpretation which was given in Germany to the situation. From the very first moment it was clearly understood that the nation was confronted with a most serious European crisis, and among large circles of the people, not merely among the mob, it was hailed with approval and delight.¹

¹ Professor Delbrueck (*Atlantic Monthly*, February 1915) himself acknowledges that "Austria demanded conditions which would have placed Serbia under her permanent control." In order to justify the action of Austria and Germany he has therefore to maintain (1) that Russia had no right to assume the protectorate of Serbia; and (2) that the destruction of Austria-Hungary would imply that "the small nations, Slavs, Hungarians, Roumanians, and the whole Balkan peninsula and all the rest would form part of the body of the mighty Russia." Neither of these statements can be accepted. Cf. p. 46.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIA AND AUSTRIA

THE explanation of the German point of view will show that all now depended on the action of Russia. If she acquiesced things would go smoothly ; if not, a grave international situation would arise. As Count Mensdorff said, "all would depend upon Russia," and Sir Edward Grey, "if the Austrian ultimatum did not lead to trouble between Austria and Russia I had no concern with it ; I had heard nothing yet from St. Petersburg, but was very apprehensive of the view Russia would take of the situation."

We must now follow closely the action of Russia during the next two days.

I

The text of the Austrian Note reached St. Petersburg on the evening of Thursday, the 23rd, or in the early hours of Friday morning. The impression it made was very serious. As *The Times* says : "When the full text of the Austrian ultimatum was received, indignation became unbounded—public opinion is incensed at what is considered the outrageous, humiliating, brutal, and unjustifiable language of the Austrian ultimatum. Russian national sentiment would undoubtedly support the Government if mobilisation were decided."

It is clear that the Russian Government from the very first took a similar view. In order to understand this we must recall that the Austrian Government had deliberately misled them. Two days before the Ambassador at Vienna had seen Count Berchtold and had received from him an assurance "that the demands on Serbia would be thoroughly acceptable." On this he had gone away on leave.

The result was that Russia was not represented by an Ambassador at Vienna just when this sudden crisis arose, and in fact half the Ambassadors of Europe were at the moment away on leave. Worse than that, the French Government was on the high seas, so it was very difficult for them to communicate either with Paris or their allies. It looked indeed as if the opportunity had been chosen to issue the ultimatum at a time the most inconvenient for the other Powers of Europe, and this, combined with the very short time-limit, seemed clearly to indicate that the purpose was to rush through the whole affair and crush Serbia before the Powers of the Triple Entente had been able even to consider the Note.

The whole question of a danger to the peace of Europe arising from ill-considered action by Austria had been the subject of conversation with the French Government during the meetings at St. Petersburg, and as we learn from an important despatch sent by M. Viviani from Reval the two allies had proposed to take steps to try to prevent any such dangerous action being taken.

In the course of my conversation with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs we had to take into consideration the dangers which might result from any step taken by Austria-Hungary in relation to Serbia in connection with the crime of which the Hereditary Archduke has been a victim. We found ourselves in agreement in thinking that we should not leave anything undone to prevent a request for an explanation or some *mise en demeure* which would be equivalent to intervention in the internal affairs of Serbia, of such a kind that Serbia might consider it as an attack on her sovereignty and independence.

We have in consequence come to the opinion that we might, by means of a friendly conversation with Count Berchtold, give him counsels of moderation, of such a kind as to make him understand how undesirable would be any intervention at Belgrade which would appear to be a threat on the part of the Cabinet at Vienna.

The British Ambassador, who was kept informed by M. Sazonof, expressed the idea that his Government would doubtless associate itself with a *démarche* for removing any danger which might threaten general peace, and he has telegraphed to his Government to this effect.

M. Sazonof has addressed instructions to this effect to M. Schebeko. While there is no question in this of collective or concerted action at Vienna on the part of the representatives

of the Triple Entente, I ask you to discuss the matter with the Russian and British Ambassadors, and to come to an agreement with them as to the best means by which each of you can make Count Berchtold understand without delay the moderation that the present situation appears to us to require.

Further, it would be desirable to ask M. Paul Cambon to bring the advantages of this procedure to the notice of Sir Edward Grey, and to support the suggestion that the British Ambassador in Russia will have made to this effect to the Foreign Office. Count Benckendorff is instructed to make a similar recommendation.¹

Now Austria had made demands far beyond anything that could have been anticipated. There could be no doubt that in this she was quite aware that she would be coming into conflict with Russia; of this they had been warned beforehand. M. Sazonof had himself explained during the Balkan crisis that "War with Russia must inevitably follow an Austrian attack on Serbia." "Austrian domination of Serbia was as intolerable for Russia as the dependence of the Netherlands on Germany would be for Great Britain. It was, in fact, for Russia a question of life and death."² It seemed, therefore, that the ultimatum to Serbia was a deliberate challenge to Russian interests in the Balkans which had been concerted beforehand between Germany and Austria.

On Friday morning M. Sazonof went to the French Embassy to see M. Paléologue, and telephoned to Sir George Buchanan, asking him to meet him there "to discuss matters as the Austrian step clearly meant that war was imminent." We have two accounts of what took place, a short *résumé* by the French Ambassador, and a longer and very interesting telegram from Sir George Buchanan.³ The French Ambassador says:

The intentions of the Emperor of Russia and his Ministers could not be more pacific, a fact of which the President of the Republic and the President of the Council have been able to satisfy themselves directly; but the ultimatum which the Austro-Hungarian Government has just delivered to the Cabinet at Belgrade introduces a new and disquieting element into the situation.

Public opinion in Russia would not allow Austria to offer violence to Serbia.⁴

¹ F. 22.

² E. 139.

³ E. 6.

⁴ F. 31.

To Sir George Buchanan M. Sazonof said that "Austria's conduct was both provocative and immoral, some of her demands were quite impossible of acceptance." "Austria would never have taken such action unless Germany had first been consulted." "M. Sazonof assumes that Germany will desire to support her ally, and I am afraid that this impression is correct."

The Russian Minister and the French Ambassador were agreed that "nothing but the assurance of the solidarity of the Triple Entente can prevent the German Powers from emphasising their provocative attitude." The French Ambassador said "that France would fulfil all the obligations entailed by her alliance with Russia if necessity arose, besides supporting Russia strongly in any diplomatic negotiations." He thought that either Austria had made up her mind to act at once, or that she was bluffing. "Whichever it might be, our only chance of averting war was for us to adopt a firm and united attitude." "It seems to me, from the language held by the French Ambassador, that even if we declined to join them, France and Russia are determined to make a strong stand."

The real object of the meeting seems to have been that the French Ambassador should support M. Sazonof in bringing strong pressure to bear upon Sir George Buchanan to get a declaration from the British Government that they would not fail to proclaim their solidarity with Russia and France. M. Sazonof "said that we [Great Britain] would sooner or latter be dragged into war if it did break out; we should have rendered war more likely if we did not from the outset make common cause with his country and France; at any rate he held that His Majesty's Government should express strong reprobation of the action taken by Austria."

In answer to this, Sir George Buchanan said that "he did not see any reason to expect any declaration of solidarity from His Majesty's Government that would entail an unconditional engagement on their part to support Russia by force of arms. Direct British interests in Serbia were nil, and a war on behalf of that country would never be sanctioned by British opinion."

¹ The action of Great Britain in regard to this request is discussed fully in Chapter XV, in connection with the whole policy of this country.

He suggested "that the important thing was to induce Austria to extend the time-limit, and that the first thing to do was to bring influence to bear on Austria with that end in view." The French Ambassador thought there was not time to carry out this suggestion, and, as we shall see, he was right in this. Sir George Buchanan suggested that they should find out "how far Serbia was prepared to go to meet the demands formulated by Austria." M. Sazonof replied that he must first consult his colleagues on this point, "but that doubtless some of the Austrian demands could be accepted by Serbia." In conclusion

M. Sazonof said that he himself thought that Russian mobilisation would at any rate have to be carried out; but a council of Ministers was being held this afternoon to consider
 Sir G. Buchanan, July 24. the whole question. A further council would be held, probably to-morrow, at which the Emperor would preside, when a decision would be come to.¹

M. Sazonof also saw the Austrian Ambassador, and in the conversation which followed the fundamental difference between the two points of view was at once apparent. Count Szápáry insisted that the matter was one which concerned Austria and Serbia alone, and that Austria had no intentions hostile to Russia, and was only acting in self-defence. M. Sazonof contended that it was obvious that the real object of Austria was to make war upon Serbia, and all the explanations of the Ambassador were unable to alter his opinion—which, indeed, was not surprising.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs as he received me, said that he knew what brought me to him, and he would at once explain to me that he could not take up any position to my
 Count Szápáry, July 24. *démarche*. I began by reading out my instructions.²

The Minister interrupted me for the first time on the mention of the series of outrages, and, on my explanation, asked if then it had been proved that they all had originated at Belgrade. I laid stress on the fact that they all sprang from Serbian instigation. In the further course of the reading he said that he knew what it was all about: we wanted to make war on Serbia, and this was to serve as a pretext. I replied that our attitude during recent years was a sufficient proof that we neither sought nor required pretexts against Serbia. The formal declaration which is required did not elicit any objection from

¹ E. 6.

² A. 8. See p. 35.

the Minister; he only continued to maintain that Pasić had already expressed himself to this effect. This I corrected. "*Il dira cela 25 fois si vous voulez*" said he. I said to him that no one among us was attacking the integrity of Serbia or the dynasty. M. Sazonof expressed himself most vigorously against the dissolution of the *Narodna Odbrana* which Serbia would never undertake. The participation of Imperial and Royal officials in the suppression of the revolutionary movements elicited further protests on the part of the Minister. Serbia then will no longer be master in her own house. "You will always be wanting to intervene again, and what a life you will lead Europe." I answered that if Serbia shows goodwill it will be a quieter life than hitherto.

The commentary added to the communication of the Note was listened to by the Minister with fair composure; at the passage that our feelings were shared by those of all civilised nations, he observed that this was a mistake. With all the emphasis I could command, I pointed out how regrettable it would be if we could not come to an understanding with Russia, in this question in which everything which is most sacred to us was at stake, and whatever the Minister might say, everything which is sacred in Russia. The Minister attempted to minimise the Monarchical side of the question.

With regard to the dossier which was put at the disposal of the Governments, M. Sazonof wanted to know why we had given ourselves this trouble, as we had already delivered the ultimatum. This was the best proof that we did not really desire an impartial testing of the matter. I said to him that the results which had been attained by our own investigations were quite sufficient for our procedure in this matter, which had to do with Austria-Hungary and Serbia, and that we were only ready to give the Powers further information if it interested them, as we had nothing to keep secret.

M. Sazonof said that now after the ultimatum had gone he was not in the least curious. He represented the matter as if we only wanted to make war with Serbia whatever happened. I answered that we were the most peace-loving Power in the world, but what we wanted was security for our territory from foreign revolutionary intrigues, and protection of our dynasty from bombs.

In the course of the further discussion, M. Sazonof again made the observation that we certainly had created a serious situation.

In spite of his relative calm, the attitude of the Minister was throughout unaccommodating and hostile.¹

On the same day a similar interview took place at Vienna between Count Berchtold and the Russian Chargé d'Affaires—it

¹ A. 14.

may more conveniently be inserted here, though it is probable that the record did not reach St. Petersburg till late that night or early the next morning.

I received the Russian Chargé d'Affaires on the morning of the 24th, and assured him that I attached special importance to bringing to his knowledge as soon as possible the steps we were taking in Belgrade, and explaining to him our point of view as regards them.

Count Berchtold,
July 24.

Prince Koudacheff, while thanking me for this courtesy, did not hide his anxiety as to our categorical procedure against Serbia, and he observed that there had always been preoccupation in St. Petersburg, that our *démarche* might take the form of a humiliation for Serbia, which must have an echo in Russia.

I took the opportunity of reassuring the Russian Chargé d'Affaires as to this. Our aim was to clear up the untenable position of Serbia as regards the Monarchy, and with this object to cause the Government of that State on the one side publicly to disavow the tendencies directed against the present establishment of the Monarchy, and to suppress them by administrative measures, and on the other side to make it possible for us to satisfy ourselves that these measures are honestly carried out. I explained at greater length the danger, not only for the integrity of the Monarchy, but also for the balance of power and the peace of Europe, which would be involved in giving further scope to the Great-Serbian propaganda, and how all the dynasties and, not least, the Russian, would apparently be threatened if the idea took root that a movement which made use of murder as a national weapon could be continued with impunity.

In conclusion, I pointed out that we did not aim at any increase of territory, but only at the maintenance of what we possess, a point of view which could not fail to be understood by the Russian Government.

Prince Koudacheff remarked on this that he did not know the view of his own Government, and also did not know what position Serbia would take towards individual demands.

At the conclusion of our interview the Chargé d'Affaires expressly said that he would not fail to bring to the notice of his Government the explanation which I had given him on the step we had taken, especially to the effect that no humiliation of Serbia was intended by us.¹

There is one point of some importance to be noticed in both these conversations; the Austrians make a categorical statement that they did not propose to annex any Serbian territory;

¹ A. 18.

this is, we shall see, a matter to which especially the German Government attached the greatest importance. On the other hand there is nothing to reassure the Russians as to the danger that if the Austrians made war upon Serbia and occupied the country, the result would not be that Serbia would come into a condition of vassalage to Austria. This, of course, was the serious danger, and it was the apprehension that this would inevitably result from their action, which made it impossible for M. Sazonof to give any approval to the Austrian proposals, or any hope that Russia would be able to stand aside and watch their proceedings as an uninterested party.

II

The Council of Ministers which had already been summoned for other business was held at three o'clock on that afternoon, and lasted several hours. The final decision was referred to a special meeting of the Council of State which was called for the following day, but certain steps were immediately taken. First of all, in accordance with Sir George Buchanan's suggestion, an endeavour was to be made to obtain from the Austro-Hungarian Government an extension of the time-limit fixed in the ultimatum, "in order that the Powers might be able to form an opinion of the judicial dossier, the communication of which is offered to them." ¹ It had been one of the chief complaints to Count Szápáry that no time was allowed for this. This decision was sent to the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Vienna, in the following terms:

The communication made by the Austro-Hungarian Government to the Powers the day after the presentation of the ultimatum at Belgrade affords to the Powers a period which is quite insufficient to enable them to take any steps which might help to smooth away the difficulties that have arisen.

M. Sazonof,
July 24.

In order to prevent the consequences, incalculable and equally fatal to all the Powers, which may result from the course of action followed by the Austro-Hungarian Government, it seems to us to be above all essential that the period allowed for the Serbian reply should be extended. Austria-Hungary, having

¹ F. 38.

declared herself to be disposed to inform the Powers of the facts elicited by the inquiry upon which the Imperial and Royal Government base their accusations, should equally allow them sufficient time to study those facts.

In this case, if the Powers were convinced that certain of the Austrian demands were well founded, they would be in a position to offer corresponding advice to the Serbian Government.

A refusal to prolong the term of the ultimatum would render nugatory the representations made by the Austro-Hungarian Government to the Powers, and would be in contradiction to the very bases of international comity.¹

This is the first of the many proposals which came whether from Russia, France, or Great Britain for ameliorating the situation. It was at once communicated to the Russian representatives at London, Berlin, Paris, and Rome, and they were instructed to ask for the support of the Governments of these Powers.

France, Italy, and Great Britain at once gave their support. "The Russian Government has asked that you should make a corresponding and urgent *démarche* to Count Berchtold. I beg you to support the request of your colleague."²

It was, of course, most important to get the support of the German Government, and early on Saturday morning the Russian Chargé d'Affaires asked to see the Secretary of State for this purpose.

I have received your telegram of the 11th/24th of July and have communicated its contents to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

He tells me that the British Government have likewise urged him to advise Vienna to extend the time-limit of the ultimatum. He has informed Vienna telegraphically of this step, and he will do the same as regards Russia's action, but he fears that in the absence of Berchtold, who has left for Ischl, and in view of the lack of time, his telegrams may have no result.³

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires has been instructed to ask the German Government to make strong representations to the Cabinet at Vienna, with a view to obtaining an

extension of the time-limit of the ultimatum.

Herr von Jagow not having made an appointment with him until late in the afternoon, that is to say, till the very moment when the ultimatum will expire, M. Bronewsky sent an

¹ R. 4. Another version of this telegram will be found in E. 26.

² F. 39.

³ R. 14

urgent note addressed to the Secretary of State in which he points out the lateness of Austria's communication to the Powers makes the effect of this communication illusory, inasmuch as it does not give the Powers time to consider the facts brought to their notice before the expiration of the time-limit. He insists very strongly on the necessity for extending the time-limit, unless the intention be to create a serious crisis.¹

It was, of course, quite true that there was no time even to bring to bear upon Austria pressure to induce her to prolong the time-limit of the ultimatum. Surely this is in itself the strongest condemnation of the Austrian procedure. It was this very short time-limit, the precipitation with which events were pushed on, which was a complete demonstration that events had been deliberately planned so as to make all mediation impossible, in order that the Austrians might crush Serbia before any interference or intervention could be arranged.

It was, moreover, clear that it was not merely a difficulty as to time which was influencing Berlin. This is shown by the telegram from the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, which continues as follows :

Moreover, he [Herr von Jagow] has doubts as to the wisdom of Austria yielding at the last moment, and he is inclined to think that such a step on her part might increase the assurance of Serbia. I replied that a great Power such as Austria could give way without impairing her prestige, and I adduced every other similar argument, but failed, nevertheless, to obtain any more definite promise. Even when I gave him to understand that action must be taken at Vienna if the possibility of terrible consequences was to be avoided, the Minister for Foreign Affairs answered each time in the negative.²

M. Bronewsky,
July 25.

The request, reasonable as it might appear to be, was from the beginning condemned to futility. The Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Vienna, Prince Koudacheff, telegraphed as soon as he received his instructions :

Count Berchtold is at Ischl. In view of the impossibility of arriving there in time, I have telegraphed to him our proposal to extend the time-limit of the ultimatum, and I have repeated this proposal verbally to Baron Macchio. The latter promised to communicate it in time to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, but added that he had no hesitation in predicting a categorical refusal.³

Prince Kouda-
cheff, July 25.

¹ F. 42.

² R. 14.

³ R. 11.

The French Ambassador gives a fuller account :

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires received instructions from his Government to ask for an extended time-limit for the ultimatum to Serbia at the very moment that Count Berchtold was leaving for Ischl, with the intention, according to the newspapers, of remaining there near the Emperor until the end of the crisis.

M. Dumaine,
July 25.

Prince Koudacheff informed him nevertheless of the *démarche* which he had to carry out, by means of two telegrams *en clair*, one addressed to him on his journey and the other at his destination. He does not expect any result.

Baron Macchio, General Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to whom the Prince communicated the tenor of his instructions and of his telegrams, behaved with icy coldness when it was represented to him that to submit for consideration grievances with documentary proofs without leaving time for the dossier to be studied, was not consonant with international courtesy. Baron Macchio replied that one's interests sometimes exempted one from being courteous.

The Austrian Government is determined to inflict humiliation on Serbia; it will accept no intervention from any Power until the blow has been delivered and received full in the face by Serbia.¹

The definite answer came on Saturday and it was a categorical refusal. "I have just heard from Macchio that the Austro-Hungarian Government refuse our proposal to extend the time-limit of the Note."²

The Austrian explanation is given in a telegram from Count Berchtold :

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires called this morning on the Chief Departmental Head, in order to express in the name of his Government the wish that the time-limit fixed in our Note to Serbia might be prolonged.

Count Berchtold,
July 25.

This request was based on the grounds that the Powers had been taken by surprise by our move, and that the Russian Government would regard it merely as a natural consideration for the other Cabinets, on the part of the Vienna Cabinet, if an opportunity were given to the former to examine the data on which our communication to the Powers was based and to study our prospective dossier.

The Chief Departmental Head replied to the Chargé d'Affaires that he would immediately bring his explanation to my know-

¹ F. 45.

² R. 12.

ledge; but that he could tell him at once that there was no prospect of a prolongation of the time-limit fixed being granted on our side. As to the grounds which the Russian Government had advanced in support of the wish they had expressed, they appeared to rest upon a mistaken hypothesis. Our Note to the Powers was in no way intended to invite them to make known their own views on the subject, but merely bore the character of a statement for information, the communication of which we regarded as a duty laid on us by international courtesy. For the rest, we regarded our action as a matter concerning us and Serbia alone, which action, notwithstanding the patience and long-suffering we had exhibited for years past, we had been forced much against our own wish, to take by the development of circumstances, for the defence of our most vital interests.¹

This therefore is the end of the first suggestion for improving the situation; it was made by Russia, it was supported by Italy, France, and England; it was very coolly received by Germany, and it was at once rejected by Austria.

III

Meanwhile further discussions and negotiations were going on. After the meeting of the Council on Friday M. Sazonof had an interview with Count Pourtalès. This, from the Russian point of view, was naturally of great importance, as it was essential for them to find out whether the German Government intended to give their full and unconditional support to Austria, or whether they were prepared to take up rather the attitude of a mediator, to smooth away the differences and, what would not have been difficult, to help in bringing about an understanding between the two Powers. The result was very discouraging. Count Pourtalès communicated the official German statement which we have already dealt with, the whole purport of which was to insist on Russia being kept out of the matter altogether. M. Sazonof tried to get the Ambassador to appreciate the Russian point of view that the matter was one in which the other Powers of Europe were justified in claiming to be heard, but in vain. The result of the interview was to make quite clear that Germany intended at whatever cost to stand behind Austria and to support her in the refusal to allow

¹ A. 21.

her quarrel with Serbia to be submitted either to Russia or to any other Power.

The fullest account we have of this interview is that given by Count Szápáry.

After a Council of the Ministers which lasted for five hours, M. Sazonof this evening received the German Ambassador, and had a long conversation with him.

Count Szápáry,
July 24.

The Minister took the point of view which is probably to be considered as the outcome of the Council of Ministers that the Austro-Hungarian-Serbian conflict was not a matter confined to these States, but a European affair, as the settlement arrived at in the year 1909 by the Serbian declaration had been made under the auspices of the whole of Europe.

The Minister pointed out particularly that he had been disagreeably affected by the circumstance that Austria-Hungary had offered a dossier for investigation when an ultimatum had already been presented. Russia would require an international investigation of the dossier, which had been put at our disposition. My German colleague at once brought to M. Sazonof's notice that Austria-Hungary would not accept interference in its difference with Serbia, and that Germany also on her side could not accept a suggestion which would be contrary to the dignity of her ally as a Great Power.

In the further course of the conversation, the Minister explained that that which Russia could not accept with indifference was the eventual intention of Austria-Hungary "*de dévorer la Serbie.*" Count Pourtalès answered that he did not accept any such intention on the part of Austria-Hungary, as this would be contrary to the most special interest of the Monarchy. The only object of Austria-Hungary was "*d'infliger à la Serbie le châtiment justement mérité.*" M. Sazonof on this expressed his doubts whether Austria-Hungary would allow herself to be contented with this, even if explanations on this point had been made.

The interview concluded with an appeal by M. Sazonof that Germany should work with Russia at the maintenance of peace. The German Ambassador assured the Russian Minister that Germany certainly had no wish to bring about a war, but that she naturally fully represented the interests of her ally.¹

Count Pourtalès' own account, published in the German White Book, is very brief:

I have just utilised the contents of Order 592 in a prolonged interview with Sazonof. The Secretary [Sazonof] indulged in

¹ A. 16.

unmeasured accusations toward Austria-Hungary, and he was very much agitated. He declared most positively that Russia could not permit under any circumstances that the Serbo-Austrian difficulty be settled alone between the parties concerned.¹

We have other references to it from the French Ambassador, who tells us that :

M. Sazonof has asked the German Ambassador to point out to his Government the danger of the situation, but he refrained from making any allusion to the measures which Russia would no doubt be led to take, if either the national independence or the territorial integrity of Serbia were threatened. The evasive replies and the recriminations of Count Pourtalès left an unfavourable impression on M. Sazonof.

M. Paléologue,
July 25.

The Ministers will hold a Council to-morrow² with the Emperor presiding. M. Sazonof preserves complete moderation. We must avoid, he said to me, everything which might precipitate the crisis. I am of opinion that, even if the Austro-Hungarian Government come to blows with Serbia, we ought not to break off negotiations.³

The Serbian Ambassador also gives us some information :

As I was leaving M. Sazonof, to whom I communicated the contents of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, I met the German Ambassador. He seemed to be in very good spirits. During the conversation which followed in regard to the Austro-Hungarian *démarche* I asked Count Pourtalès to indicate to me some way out of the situation created by the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum. The Ambassador replied that this depended on Serbia alone, since the matter in question must be settled between Austria and Serbia only, and did not concern any one else. In reply I told Count Pourtalès that he was under a misapprehension, and that he would see before long that this was not a question merely between Serbia and Austria, but a European question.⁴

Dr. M. Spalay-
kovitch,
July 24.

IV

Meanwhile the personal appeal of the Serbian Crown Prince had been received (see p. 33). Some decision must at once

¹ G. 4.

² This ought to be "to-night."

³ F. 38.

⁴ S. 36.

be taken. No official answer to Serbia sent on this day has been published; but all our information is to the effect that Russia urged on them all possible moderation. At the same time it was necessary that not only the Government, but the Serbian people and the Russian people should have some indication as to the line the Russian Government proposed to take. It would probably also help to avoid complications if the rest of Europe were immediately put in possession of the Russian point of view. In consequence an official communication was made to the Press and published on Saturday morning to the following effect:

Recent events and the dispatch of an ultimatum to Serbia by Austria-Hungary are causing the Russian Government the greatest anxiety. The Government are closely following the course of the dispute between the two countries to which Russia cannot remain indifferent.¹

This would have the effect of removing all misapprehension as to Russia's point of view and would warn the allied German Governments as to the dangers they were incurring. It would also serve to calm public opinion in Russia; during the last twenty-four hours excitement had been growing; it was assuming the form of demonstrations in the streets and threatened to give rise to serious disturbance. It was quite clear that it would be very difficult for the Russian Government to neglect the strong feeling that existed in St. Petersburg and other cities, and that they could not allow Serbia to be crushed by Austria.

In addition to this, a telegram was sent to the Russian Ambassador at London instructing him to press strongly for British support.

In the event of any change for the worse in the situation which might lead to joint action by the Great Powers, we count upon it that England will at once side definitely with Russia and France, in order to maintain the European balance of power, for which she has constantly intervened in the past, and which would certainly be compromised in the event of the triumph of Austria.²

M. Sazonof,
July 25.

¹ R. 10. See *The Times* of July 27, 1914.

² R. 17.

The whole situation was again thoroughly discussed by M. Sazonof and Sir George Buchanan.

On my expressing the earnest hope that Russia would not precipitate war by mobilising until you had had time to use your influence in favour of peace, His Excellency assured Sir G. Buchanan, me that Russia had no aggressive intentions, and July 25. she would take no action until it was forced upon her. Austria's action was in reality directed against Russia. She aimed at overthrowing the present *status quo* in the Balkans, and establishing her own hegemony there. He did not believe that Germany really wanted war, but her attitude was decided by ours. If we took our stand firmly with France and Russia there would be no war. If we failed them now, rivers of blood would flow, and we would in the end be dragged into war.

I said that England could play the rôle of mediator at Berlin and Vienna to better purpose as friend who, if her councils of moderation were disregarded, might one day be converted into an ally, than if she were to declare herself Russia's ally at once. His Excellency said that unfortunately Germany was convinced that she could count upon our neutrality.

I said all I could to impress prudence on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and warned him that if Russia mobilised, Germany would not be content with mere mobilisation, or give Russia time to carry out hers, but would probably declare war at once. His Excellency replied that Russia could not allow Austria to crush Serbia and become the predominant Power in the Balkans, and, if she feels secure of the support of France, she will face all the risks of war. He assured me once more that he did not wish to precipitate a conflict, but that unless Germany could restrain Austria I could regard the situation as desperate.¹

The last words express the ultimate truth. Unless Germany was willing to keep back Austria there seemed no hope of a peaceful solution, and information from Berlin seemed to point the other way. The attitude of the German Government was not hopeful; so far as it had up to that time been made plain, it seemed to show that they were entirely at one with Austria, and that the Austrian Government could depend upon their full support in whatever warlike measures they determined to take. Moreover, at Berlin there were violent expressions of popular sympathy with Austria and all the signs of growing national

¹ E. 17.

excitement which, to some extent at least, was already taking the form of national opposition to Russia.

The delivery of the Austrian Note to Serbia has made a deep impression.

The Austrian Ambassador declares that his Govern-
M. Jules Cambon, July 24. ment could not abate any of their demands. At the Wilhelmstrasse, as well as in the Press, the same view is expressed.

Most of the *Chargés d'Affaires* present in Berlin came to see me this morning. They show little hope of a peaceful issue. The Russian *Chargé d'Affaires* bitterly remarked that Austria has presented her Note at the very moment that the President of the Republic and the President of the Council had left St. Petersburg. He is inclined to think that a considerable section of opinion in Germany desires war and would like to seize this opportunity, in which Austria will no doubt be found more united than in the past, and in which the German Emperor, influenced by a desire to give support to the monarchic principle (*par un sentiment de solidarité monarchique*) and by horror at the crime, is less inclined to show a conciliatory attitude.¹

The popular demonstrations which we have already described, even if they were not actually encouraged by the Government, would certainly make it very difficult for them to withdraw when once they had taken up officially the position that Austria was justified. They had already gone far in doing so; they had pledged themselves to the position that the conflict must be localised, but localisation meant that Russia had no right to interfere or to be heard, and if they continued in this attitude Russia would have to resort to the strongest measures in order to procure either for herself or for the other Powers of Europe the recognition that they had a voice in the matter.

Europe was already before the alternative—unless Austria was willing to suspend her action she would come in a very short time into collision with Russia.

M. Sazonof said to the Italian Ambassador

that Russia would employ all diplomatic means to avoid a conflict, and that she did not give up hope that
M. Barrère, July 26. mediation might lead Austria to a less uncompromising attitude; but that Russia could not be asked to allow Serbia to be crushed.²

¹ F. 29.

² F. 52.

V

We are now in a position to understand the Russian point of view at the time when the decisive Council met on Saturday afternoon. As regards Austria, the immediate cause of trouble, the action of the Austrian Government in presenting an ultimatum requiring an answer in forty-eight hours, and refusing a request that the period of time allowed should be extended, was so sharp and peremptory as to justify the anticipation that they intended to press forward with all speed and immediately to begin military operations against Serbia, which must end in the occupation of Serbian territory, and probably in the defeat of the Serbian army. This would bring about the situation which Russia was determined to prevent; it was necessary therefore that any steps taken to stop Austria should be immediate and decisive. Russia, however, could not give help by sending troops into Serbia to reinforce the Serbian army and strengthen her resistance. She could only act by immediate pressure upon Austria herself. This pressure might take one of two forms: it might be conveyed by a formal Note to the Austrian Government, informing them that any attack on Serbia would be regarded as a declaration of war against Russia. This, under the circumstances, would probably bring about an immediate outbreak of war. The only other means was to continue friendly negotiations, but at the same time to mobilise at least a portion of the Russian army, place it upon the Austrian frontier, and use this to strengthen the Russian protest.

In either case it was necessary to remember that Austria was closely allied to Germany, that the alliance had been specifically formed in order to defend either of the countries against a Russian attack. The information available was quite clearly to the effect that Germany was prepared to support Austria, and it was therefore necessary to assume that, whichever method was pursued, whether it was something in the nature of an ultimatum or military preparations, if Austria did not give way there would be an immediate war, not only against Austria but also against Germany. Ill-prepared as she was, the risk must be taken unless she was ready to surrender to Austria her whole position in the Balkans.

The position which would be taken by England was still quite uncertain, and it was impossible to depend on English assistance, though there was a general conviction that if the war broke out England would sooner or later be driven to take part in it. As for Italy at this time, we have no information, but it is possible that the Russian Government already had reason to hope that Italy would wish to keep out of the struggle if it could be made clear that it was Austria and not Russia which was taking the offensive. With regard to France, it was also most desirable not to precipitate matters; the French President and other high officers of State had not yet returned, and it was a grave inconvenience that at this critical moment communication with them was extremely difficult.

Everything therefore seemed to point to the second of the alternative measures. It would be possible at once to begin all the necessary military preparations; this would allow time for the continuance of negotiations and still leave open the possibility for the preservation of peace. If after the expiration of the time that was necessary for preliminary measures no satisfactory arrangements could be made, if Austria refused to give way, then the armies could be mobilised, and their presence on the frontier would add weight to Russian protest.

The great advantage of this was that it would leave time for negotiations and mediation; it would be quite easy to find some formula which would make the situation less acute, and war would not ensue unless Germany and Austria desired it.

We are, of course, not in a position to know positively what happened at the Council which met on Saturday afternoon in the presence of the Czar; it was attended not only by the Ministers but also by the more important members of the Imperial family. As to the state of mind we may accept as typical the saying attributed to the Czar: "We have stood this sort of thing for seven and a half years, this is enough." Our most authoritative statement as to the result comes from a French despatch:

At the Council of Ministers on the 25th, which was held in presence of the Emperor, the mobilisation of thirteen army corps intended eventually to operate against Austria was considered; this mobilisation, however, would only be made effective if Austria were to bring armed

M. Bienvenu-
Martin, July 26.

pressure to bear upon Serbia, and not till after notice had been given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, upon whom falls the duty of fixing the day, liberty being left to him to go on with negotiations even if Belgrade should be occupied. Russian opinion makes clear that it is both politically and morally impossible for Russia to allow Serbia to be crushed.¹

We may probably accept this as a true account.

Russia had taken up her position. All that she did was well considered, open, and based on a clear and consistent policy. Her standpoint was well defined and publicly avowed. All that was to happen must follow from this unless Austria accepted the warning and held her hand. No one could say that she had misled Europe.

And can we say that her action was wrong? Her object was to save Serbia from destruction; she had successfully preached moderation to Serbia, but had declared that she would not desert her if war came, and if she was effectively to protect Serbia, how could she do so unless preparations were made for eventual mobilisation?

If any one is inclined to condemn this decision let him put himself into the position of the Russian Ministers and consider the alternatives from their point of view. In all affairs where a practical decision has to be made there is a balance of advantage and disadvantage. It is easy for the historian to point out the evil results of the course actually chosen; the man who has to make a decision must also consider the results of the other course. No criticism is worth a moment's consideration unless it is based on a comparison of this kind; every critic must imagine himself clothed with responsibility and having to bear the weight of the consequences of his action or his inaction.

Let us imagine that Russia had acted as Germany and Austria desired, that she determined to do nothing, to let Austria go on, to give no help to Serbia. It is possible that in this case the Serbian Government would have at least in words surrendered, possible but very improbable; had they done so there would almost certainly have been something in the nature of a revolution; possibly the King would have been deposed; anyhow great disorder would have ensued; the Government could scarcely have maintained their authority and would have

¹ F. 50.

been unable to carry out the engagements which they had made. It is almost inevitable that the Austrian army would have entered Serbia to keep order.

If, as is more probable, the Government had still refused full acceptance (and had they been honest they must have done so, for as we have seen the demands could not have been carried out), war would have followed; the Serbian army would have fought bravely with desperation, but would have been unable to hold its own; it would have been defeated and scattered. In this case also there would have been an Austrian occupation. This would certainly have been followed by a prolonged and bitter guerilla war, fought on both sides with great inhumanity; sympathetic disorder would probably have broken out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if not in other Slavonic provinces. All this would have prolonged the Austrian occupation, and any government established in Serbia could only have maintained itself by Austrian support. Serbia would thereby have come under Austrian occupation and an Austrian army would have controlled the whole of the western Balkans, including the road to Salonica. Serbia would have been ruined and, as an independent State, would have ceased to exist. It was no good the Austrians asserting that they did not propose to interfere with the sovereignty of Serbia or Russian interests; these two results would have followed from their action with a mathematical necessity. Russia would then have been confronted with a new situation; she would then have had to mobilise when it was too late; the whole achievement of 1912 would have been undone.

In order to prevent this Russia must intervene and intervene immediately. She could do so at first by diplomatic pressure, but she must be prepared to show that if necessary she would support her protest by arms; otherwise it would be ignored.

Russian mobilisation was no threat to Austria or to Germany; it was, as M. Sazonof again and again declared, a necessary and inevitable precautionary measure.

But if we apply the same canon of criticism to the action of Austria and Germany, can we say in the same way that their action was necessary? What was the alternative for them? Had they accepted mediation, had they allowed Serbia to plead her cause before Europe, what would have been the result?—

surely it would have been this, that Austria would have been able to get the necessary guarantees for a quiet and peaceable existence, the guarantees which she might rightly claim, but she would have got them without war; or if Serbia remained recalcitrant, the military pressure necessary to bring her to submission would have had behind it the moral support of Europe. Serbia would certainly have been humbled and weakened. It might have been necessary, in order to bring this about, that Belgrade would have had to be occupied, but it would have been occupied as a police measure.

Again and again in the discussions we find it stated that the position of Austria as a Great Power was at stake; had she adopted this policy, would it have been weakened? Surely this would have shown much more strength, much more certainty in action, much more courage; and had this been adopted, how admirable would have been the effect on Europe; all the suspicions and unrest aroused by the increase of German armaments would have been dispelled; the conviction that Germany was a danger to the peace of Europe would have ceased, and she would, in pursuance of all legitimate aims, have been able to depend on the goodwill of the other Powers.

CHAPTER IV

THE SERBIAN REPLY

MEANWHILE Belgrade was the scene of immense excitement. M. Pashitch, who with most of the Ministers had been absent on an electoral campaign, hastily returned. On Friday he informed the Russian Chargé d'Affaires that he would hand in the reply on Saturday at six o'clock. "I told him that the Serbian Government would appeal to the Governments of the friendly Powers to protect the independence of Serbia. If war was inevitable, I added, Serbia would carry it on."¹

The same day he told Mr. Crackanthorpe that the demands "were such that no Government of an independent country could accept them in their entirety. I expressed the hope that the British Government might possibly see their way to induce the Austro-Hungarian Government to moderate them. I did not conceal my anxiety as to future developments."²

The short time available, however, left no opportunity for the Powers to consider the situation and give formal advice to Serbia. This was especially the case with regard to Great Britain. On Friday, Prince Lichnowsky, in conversation with Sir Edward Grey, said :

that Austria might be expected to move when the time-limit expired unless Serbia could give unconditional acceptance of Austrian demands *in toto*. Speaking privately, His Excellency suggested that a negative reply must in no case be returned by Serbia ; a reply favourable on some points must be sent at once, so that an excuse against immediate action might be afforded to Austria.³

Sir E. Grey,
July 24.

This last observation is interesting, for it shows that Prince Lichnowsky at least still hoped that some kind of accommodation

¹ S. 34.

² S. 35.

³ E. 11.

might be arrived at, and that time might be available for negotiation.

In answer to a request for advice from the Serbian Minister, Sir Edward Grey therefore said :

Serbia ought to promise that, if it is proved that Serbian officials, however subordinate they may be, were accomplices in the murder of the Archduke at Sarajevo, she will give Austria the fullest satisfaction. She certainly ought to express concern and regret. For the rest, Serbian Government must reply to Austrian demands as they consider best in Serbian interests.

Sir E. Grey,
July 24.

It is impossible to say whether military action by Austria when time-limit expires can be averted by anything but unconditional acceptance of her demands, but only chance appears to lie in avoiding an absolute refusal and replying favourably to as many points as the time-limit allows.

Serbian Minister here has begged that His Majesty's Government will express their views, but I cannot undertake responsibility of saying more than I have said above, and I do not like to say even that without knowing what is being said at Belgrade by French and Russian Governments. You should therefore consult your French and Russian colleagues as to repeating what my views are, as expressed above, to Serbian Government.

I have urged upon German Ambassador that Austria should not precipitate military action.¹

The Serbian Minister at Paris had also asked for advice, but here again it was for the same reasons difficult to give any formal or official advice. But the Political Director, speaking personally, suggested that they should try at any rate to gain time, and should offer satisfaction on all those points which were not inconsistent with the dignity and sovereignty of Serbia ; that he should state that Serbia, while she was quite ready to take measures against all the accomplices of a crime which she strongly condemned, required full information as to the evidence, in order to be able to verify it with all speed, and above all, the time to escape from the direct grip of Austria by declaring herself ready to submit to the arbitration of Europe.²

The result was that except the general advice that they should be as conciliatory as possible, no definite help was available.

¹ E. 12.

² F. 26.

I have seen the new French Minister, who has just arrived from Constantinople, and my Russian colleague, and informed them of your views.

Mr. Crackanthorpe, July 25.

They have not yet received instructions from their Governments, and in view of this and of the proposed conciliatory terms of the Serbian reply, I have up to now abstained from offering advice to the Serbian Government.

I think it is highly probable that the Russian Government have already urged the utmost moderation on the Serbian Government.¹

We have no official statement as to the communication which passed between the Russian and Serbian Governments, but there can be little doubt that the Russian Government advised the Serbians to go as far as was possible in accepting the demands. Sir Edward Grey, for instance, says on Monday: "I assumed that the Serbian reply could not have gone as far as it did unless Russia had exercised conciliatory influence at Belgrade." This at least, however, the Serbians knew, that Austria had declared she would be contented with nothing but the complete acceptance of the whole of her demands; secondly, that the request for prolongation of the time-limit had been refused;² and thirdly, that Russia had publicly declared that she could not be disinterested in the Serbian question.

That the demands could not be completely accepted had been, as we have seen, determined from the first; therefore in the course of Friday afternoon the mobilisation of the Serbian army was ordered and all preparations made for removing the Government from Belgrade, which was open to immediate attack by the Austrians, to Nish.

The Council of Ministers are now drawing up their reply to the Austrian Note. I am informed by the Under-Secretary of State

for Foreign Affairs that it will be most conciliatory and will meet the Austrian demands in as large a measure as is possible.

Mr. Crackanthorpe, July 25.

The following is a brief summary of the projected reply:

The Serbian Government consent to the publication of a declaration in the *Official Gazette*. The ten points are accepted with reservations. Serbian Government declare themselves ready to agree to a mixed commission of inquiry so long as the appointment of the commission can be shown to be in accordance with

¹ E. 22.

² The Austrian papers contain articles which were obviously inspired dealing with the request and its refusal.

international usage. They consent to dismiss and prosecute those officers who can be clearly proved to be guilty, and they have already arrested the officer referred to in the Austrian Note. They are prepared to suppress the Narodna Odbrana.

The Serbian Government consider that, unless the Austrian Government want war at any cost, they cannot but be content with the full satisfaction offered in the Serbian reply.¹

Cabinet Council met yesterday evening and early this morning, form of answer to our Note was settled after several drafts, and is to be delivered to me before the time-limit expires.

Freiherr von Giesl, July 25. As I hear, Royal train is being made up; gold belonging to the National Bank and to the railway as well as the Foreign Office records, are being taken into the interior of the country. Some of my colleagues are of the opinion that they must follow the Government; packing-up is proceeding at the Russian Legation in particular.

Garrison has left town in field order. Ammunition depots in the fortress were evacuated. Railway station thronged with soldiers. The ambulance trains have left Belgrade, proceeding towards the south. In pursuance of the advices which have reached me while I write, we intend, in the event of a rupture, to leave Belgrade by the 6.30 train.²

The Austrians laid much stress on this action of the Serbians as showing a fixed warlike intention, and suggest that they were in fact the first to begin any kind of military preparation.

Herr von Tschirschky informed me to-day in pursuance of his instructions that according to a telegram from Prince Lichnowsky which had been despatched in London on the 25th of July at 3 p.m., Sir E. Grey had transmitted to the latter the sketch of an answer from Serbia, and had remarked in the private letter accompanying it that he hoped that the Berlin Cabinet, in view of the conciliatory tenor of this answer, would support its acceptance in Vienna.

I consider it desirable that Your Excellency should again approach the matter with the Secretary of State, and call his attention to the fact that almost simultaneously with the transmission by him of this letter to Prince Lichnowsky, namely at 3 p.m. yesterday, Serbia had already ordered the general mobilisation of her army, which proves that no inclination for a peaceful solution existed in Belgrade. It was not till six o'clock, after mobilisation had been proclaimed, that the answer, which had apparently been previously telegraphed to London and the contents of which were not reconcilable with our demands, was delivered to the Imperial and Royal Minister at Belgrade.³

¹ E. 21.

² A. 22.

³ A. 29.

If, however, we consider the position of Belgrade, an almost unprotected town situated on the frontier and liable at any moment to attack, and if we recollect that the Serbian army was entirely unprepared and in no way in a condition to begin fighting, it may well be considered a necessary measure of precaution. The refusal of any extension of the time-limit had shown that the Austrians intended to press on and would not permit any delay or any time for negotiation, and it might quite well be expected that a declaration of war and an attack on Belgrade would come within a few hours of the delivery of the reply.

The time at which the answer was to be delivered expired at six o'clock. At a quarter to six M. Pashitch went in person to the Legation and handed his answer to Herr von Giesl, who "stated that he would have to compare it with his instructions and that he would then give an answer immediately." M. Pashitch had scarcely returned to the Ministry when he received a note from Herr von Giesl "that he was not satisfied with our reply, and that he was leaving Belgrade the same evening together with the entire staff of the Legation." He added that, on receipt of the note, diplomatic relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary must be considered as definitely broken off.

Herr von Giesl left Belgrade by the 6.30 train. His action was at once confirmed by the Government.

We have broken off diplomatic relations with Serbia after she had refused the demands we had addressed her. I beg Your Excellency now to proceed at once to the Foreign Minister or his deputy, and to express yourself to him approximately to the following effect:

Count Berchtold,
July 26.

The Royal Serbian Government have refused to comply with the demands which we were forced to address to them for the permanent assurance of our most vital interests which were menaced by them, and have thereby made it clear that they are not willing to abandon their revolutionary efforts, which are directed towards the continual disturbance of some of our frontier provinces and their ultimate severance from the Monarchy.

To our regret and very much against our will, we therefore find ourselves obliged to compel Serbia by the sharpest measures to make a fundamental alteration in the hostile attitude it has hitherto adopted.¹

¹ A. 35.

The Serbian reply does not seem to have merited this contemptuous treatment. In tone it was in general conciliatory, and it went far to accept most of the several requests contained in the Austrian Note. On the other hand, each one was accepted only with certain reserves, sometimes amounting to little more than verbal differences, sometimes embodying important points of substance.¹

The Austrian Government, in communicating it to the Powers, accompanied it by a critical memorandum explaining why they were unable to regard this modified acceptance as satisfactory; and during the next few days further explanations on different points were made in the official correspondence. It will be convenient to deal with all of these together, in order to show what at the end were the remaining points of difference as to the Note.

The Serbians in their reply naturally drew a distinction between the acts of the Government and the acts of private individuals; they pointed out that in no way had the Government identified themselves with any proceedings inconsistent with their declaration of 1909, and said they could not be held responsible for manifestations of a private character, such as articles in the Press and the peaceable work of societies—"manifestations which take place in nearly all countries in the ordinary course of events and which, as a general rule, escape official control." The answer of the Austrians to a great extent evades this point, but they justly point out that their complaint was that the Serbian Government had not exercised that control over the Press and associations which might reasonably be expected. On the other hand, they make an observation which shows the extreme extent of their requirements. "The obligation was that the Serbian Government should change the whole direction of their policy and adopt a friendly and neighbourly attitude towards the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; and not merely that they should refrain from officially attacking the incorporation of Bosnia in the Monarchy." This is all very vaguely expressed, but the requirement that they should change their policy quite ignores the many events which had happened since 1909 which might quite fairly be interpreted by the Serbian Government as showing that Austria herself had adopted a hostile policy

¹ The Serbian reply with the Austrian comment are printed in A. 34.

towards Serbia. It must be remembered that the tension between the two States at this time was at any rate officially due as much to the unfriendly action of Austria in regard to the Balkan Union and the Albanian question as it was to the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With considerable skill the reply took advantage of the false procedure of the Austrian Government which, in presenting demands the justification for which depended upon the establishment of certain facts, had omitted to include any evidence of these facts in the Note. In consequence of this, for instance, the Serbian Government when asked to condemn the propaganda which was carried on against Austria-Hungary altered the wording and agreed to condemn *any propaganda that was carried on*.

Again, they agreed to many of the Austrian demands, subject to the condition that proof of the facts on which they were based was furnished to them. As to this the Austrian attitude is extraordinarily unreasonable. They simply took the line that the facts were so notorious that no evidence or proof was necessary. For instance, Clause 9 asked that the Serbian Government should furnish "explanations regarding the unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian officials who . . . since the crime of the 28th June have not hesitated to express themselves in interviews in terms of hostility to the Austro-Hungarian Government." The Serbian Government said that they would gladly give the required explanations "as soon as there were communicated to them the passages in question, and as soon as they have shown that the remarks were actually made by the said officials, while the Royal Government will itself take steps to collect evidence and proofs." This appears a very reasonable answer; a formal explanation by an independent government cannot be expected unless there is full and sufficient statement as to the facts regarding which explanation is demanded. To this the Austrian answer is:

The interviews in question must be quite well known to the Royal Serbian Government. By requesting the Imperial and Royal Government to communicate to them all kinds of details about these interviews, and keeping in reserve the holding of a formal inquiry into them, they show that they are not willing to comply seriously with this demand either.

Could anything be more unreasonable? Could anything better justify the belief that their object was to make a quarrel?

Again, the Serbian Government drew attention to the absence of any request for co-operation and help addressed to them; as they say, the Austrian Government "have made no representation except one concerning a school-book, and on that occasion they received an entirely satisfactory explanation," and again, "they expected to be invited to collaborate in an investigation of all that concerns the crime of Sarajevo, and they were ready to take measures against any persons concerning whom representations were made to them." To this, all that the Austrians answered is that the Serbian Government were accurately informed of the suspicions which were entertained against quite definite persons, and were not only in a position but also bound by their internal laws to initiate spontaneous inquiries. Even if this were the case the procedure of the Austrian Government seems quite incomprehensible; the crime had been committed on their territory, and the natural procedure would have been for them to approach the Serbian Government and ask the co-operation of the police of the two countries. This according to their own account had not been done.¹

With regard to the individual clauses, the following are the most

¹ See Austrian Red Book No. 9. Count Mensdorff is instructed to point out to Sir E. Grey: "that it would have been within the power of Serbia to take the point off the serious steps which it must expect from us, by spontaneously doing what is necessary in order to start an inquiry on Serbian soil against the Serbian accomplices in the crime of 28th June, and by bringing to light the connection, which, as has been proved, led from Belgrade to Serbia.

"The Serbian Government have, up to the present time, although a number of notorious indications point to Belgrade, not taken any steps in this direction; on the contrary, they have attempted to wipe out the existing traces.

"Thus from a telegraphic despatch from our Legation in Belgrade, it is to be gathered that the Serbian civil servant Ciganović, who is compromised by the affidavits of the criminals which agree with one another, on the day of the outrage was still in Belgrade, and three days afterwards, when his name was mentioned in the papers, had already left the town. As is well known also, the director of the Serbian Press declared that Ciganović is completely unknown in Belgrade."

important points. The Serbian Government found itself unable to agree to suppress newspapers which "foster hatred or contempt for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy," on the ground that this was inconsistent with the constitution. They promised, however, to introduce a law making attacks on Austria-Hungary in the Press a criminal offence, and also to introduce a bill for the alteration of the constitution so as to permit the confiscation of such publications.

The point which here comes up is an interesting one. Austria had demanded from Serbia what by the constitution it was impossible for the Serbian Government to grant. They refused to accept the validity of this excuse. The proposals, they said, are entirely unsatisfactory and evasive. The device is not a new one; it was used by Bismarck in 1864 when he presented an ultimatum to Denmark demanding a repeal of certain laws within a period in which it was not possible by the constitution for these laws to be altered, and made the refusal to accept his demand a cause of war.

The second point, the suppression of societies, was accepted with certain immaterial alterations. The third, as to control of schools, was partly accepted, but the request that teachers should be dismissed was ignored.

The fourth, which required the removal from military service and the administration "of all officers and officials who are guilty of propaganda against Austria-Hungary and whose names, with a communication of the evidence against them, the Austrian Government reserve the right to communicate," was perhaps the most far-reaching of all the demands. If accepted without reserve, it would have enabled the Austrian Government without appeal to require the dismissal of any person in the service of the Serbian Crown who was obnoxious to them. This would open up the way to a general proscription, the result of which might have been to deprive Serbia of the services of a large number of the ablest and most influential public servants, from the highest to the lowest, and to exclude from the public service every one whose political opinions were suspected by them. It was a demand obviously impossible of acceptance as it stood. What the Serbian Government did was to offer to dismiss those who had been proved guilty, by judicial investigation, of actions against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy, and it asked

that the names of those whom the Austrian Government desired should be dismissed should be communicated to them, together with the acts with which they were charged.

The Austrian reply is simply that their demands were not satisfied; they wanted removal of officials "who foment the propaganda against the Monarchy, a proceeding which is not generally preventable by the law in Serbia," *i.e.* they wanted removal on political grounds.

On this we get no further information from the correspondence; this is curious, for though it could not have been accepted without modification, modification would have been easy. It could, for instance, have been arranged that the names of the officials to be dismissed should have been communicated to some impartial authority appointed, for instance, either by the Powers or by the Hague Conference, and by them passed on to the Serbian Government. This would have eliminated the danger of arbitrary action.

Another important point was that in Clause 5, requiring the co-operation of the Austrian police in Serbia for the suppression of the propaganda. As M. Sazonof pointed out, "this might lead to most dangerous conclusions, and even to the risk of acts of terrorism directed against the Royal family, which clearly could not be the intention of Austria." Anyhow, the Serbians might naturally wish to know what was the nature of the co-operation desired: was it to be merely in the detective service or were the Austrian police to have the power of arrest; were the Austrian police to act on their own authority or under the orders and authority of the Serbian Government? The Serbians, therefore, said that they did not understand what the clause meant, but would "admit such collaboration as agrees with the principles of international law, with criminal procedure, and with good neighbourly relations." The answer of the Austrian Government to this is characteristic and deserves quotation. "International law as well as criminal law has nothing to do with this question; it is purely a matter of the nature of state police which is to be solved by a special agreement." How naïvely does this show the Austrian attitude towards matters of this kind; it implies that there will be introduced a political police capable of dealing with political offences quite regardless of the ordinary criminal law. In

Serbia there was no provision for an institution of this kind. That the clause required explanation is to be seen by Sir Edward Grey's observations; he at once fixed on it and said "it would be hardly consistent with the maintenance of Serbia's independent sovereignty if it were to mean, as it seemed that it might, that Austria-Hungary was to be invested with a right to appoint officials who would have authority within the frontiers of Serbia." The Austrian Government themselves, as a matter of fact, recognised that some explanation was wanted, and in consequence they communicated an explanation confidentially to Russia.

As point 5 of our demands, namely, the participation of the organs of the Imperial and Royal Government in the suppression of the subversive movement in Serbia, has given rise to special objection on the part of M. Sazonof, Your Excellency will explain strictly confidentially with regard to this point that this clause was interpolated merely out of practical considerations, and was in no way intended to infringe on the sovereignty of Serbia.

Count Berchtold,
July 25.

By *collaboration* in point 5, we are thinking of the establishment of a private *Bureau de Sûreté* at Belgrade, which would operate in the same way as the analogous Russian establishments in Paris and in co-operation with the Serbian police and administration.*

If the Serbians refused to accept because the matter required explanation, and if the Austrians gave this explanation to Russia, why was it not given in such a form that it might be communicated officially to Serbia? If so, one of the essential points standing out between the two Governments would have been removed.

As a matter of fact the conditions were so different that the analogy to the French case could not really hold. A Russian detective service in Paris to watch over Russian exiles and criminals is something very different from action by the Austrian police in a small State on their actual borders, especially as it is to be assumed that the Austrian police would take part in proceedings not only against Austrian refugees but also against Serbian subjects. None the less the explanation to a large extent meets the Serbian objection.

* A. 27.

Akin to Clause 5 was Clause 6, which required that Austrian officials should take part in the investigation to be conducted in Serbia as to the murder of the Archduke. The Serbians, while agreeing to the inquiry, objected to the co-operation "as it would be a violation of the constitution and of the laws of criminal procedure." The Austrian Government pointed out that there was a misunderstanding.

Our demand was quite clear and did not admit of misrepresentation. We desired:

(1) The opening of a judicial inquiry against accessories to the plot.

(2) The collaboration of representatives of the Imperial and Royal Government in the investigations relating thereto ("*recherches*" as opposed to "*enquête judiciaire*").

It never occurred to us that representatives of the Imperial and Royal Government should take part in the Serbian judicial proceedings; it was intended that they should collaborate only in the preliminary police investigations, directed to the collection and verification of the material for the inquiry.

If the Serbian Government misunderstand us on this point they must do so deliberately, for the distinction between "*enquête judiciaire*" and the simple "*recherches*" must be familiar to them.

In desiring to be exempted from all control of the proceedings which are to be initiated, which if properly carried through would have results of a very undesirable kind for themselves, and in view of the fact that they have no handle for a plausible refusal of the collaboration of our representatives in the preliminary police investigations (numberless precedents exist for such police intervention), they have adopted a standpoint which is intended to invest their refusal with an appearance of justification and to impress on our demand the stamp of impracticability.

It does not much matter whether the Serbian misunderstanding was assumed or genuine; the important thing is that as soon as it was removed nothing seems to have stood in the way of the acceptance of this Article.

The Serbian reply ends with the offer to submit the whole question either to arbitration of the Powers which took part in drawing up the declaration made by the Serbian Government in 1909 or to the decision of the international tribunal of the Hague. A similar offer had been made at the time of the Friedjung trial, when the Serbians had asked that the forged documents should be submitted to the Hague conference.

had been refused then, and now also no notice was taken of this by the Austrian Government. They preferred to carry through their quarrel in their own way. And yet surely they might well have accepted this offer without in the least diminishing the prestige and standing of the Austrian Monarchy in Europe. The question, indeed, was one peculiarly suitable for submission to an impartial semi-judicial tribunal such as the Hague conference. Definite accusations of a very serious nature had been brought against the Serbian people and the Serbian Government; the accusations were of a kind which could be supported by formal evidence and were capable of proof or disproof in a judicial sense. No greater humiliation could have been inflicted on a nation such as Serbia than that she should have been brought as a criminal before the bar of Europe, that her conduct should have been investigated by judges, that a verdict should have been given, and that if she had been found guilty punishment should have been formally decreed. In no way could the position and reputation of the Austrian Government have been better raised than that she should have had the foresight, the courage and restraint to submit her case in this way to an impartial tribunal. Had she won her suit, then indeed it might have been expected that the punishment, whatever it might have been which was inflicted upon Serbia, would have been accepted and submitted to by the people, for it would have come supported by the united voice of Europe and would have carried with it a moral condemnation which no action by Austria-Hungary could entail. Had this course been taken it would perhaps have been one for which there was no precedent, but it would have been a turning point in the history of Europe.

Now it must be remembered that when Austria ultimately went to war with Serbia the cause of warfare was the difference between the Austrian demands as explained, and the Serbian answer. Let every one judge for himself whether this difference was such as to justify a war, and let every one judge for himself whether, if some suitable machinery of mediation had been established, it would not have been possible that such differences as remained might have been eliminated. We get it then to this: that Austria went to war with Serbia, thereby deliberately running the risk of involving the whole of Europe in war,

because she demanded integral acceptance of her Note, and because she would neither give the time nor agree to the establishment of the machinery to convey in an official manner to the Serbian Government the explanations which might easily have resulted in a complete agreement. As M. Sazonof said: "With regard to the other points, it seemed to me with certain changes of detail it would not be difficult to find a basis of mutual agreement, if the accusations contained in them were confirmed by sufficient proof."¹

We have also valuable evidence in the same direction coming from Rome.

At the request of the Minister for Foreign Affairs I submit the following to you:

Sir R. Rodd,
July 28. In a long conversation this morning Serbian Chargé d'Affaires had said he thought that if some explanations were given regarding mode in which Austrian agents would require to intervene under Article 5 and Article 6, Serbia might still accept the whole Austrian Note.

As it was not to be anticipated that Austria would give such explanations to Serbia, they might be given to Powers engaged in discussions, who might then advise Serbia to accept without conditions.

The Austro-Hungarian Government had in the meantime published a long official explanation of grounds on which Serbian reply was considered inadequate. Minister for Foreign Affairs considered many points besides explanation—such as slight verbal difference in sentence regarding renunciation of propaganda—quite childish, but there was a passage which might prove useful in facilitating such a course as was considered practicable by the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires. It was stated that co-operation of Austrian agents in Serbia was to be only in investigation, not in judicial or administrative measures. Serbia was said to have wilfully misinterpreted this. He thought, therefore, that ground might be cleared here.

I only reproduce from memory, as I had not yet received text of Austrian declaration.²

There was very considerable delay in the communication of the Serbian answer to the other Powers. It did not reach London, Paris, or St. Petersburg till Monday morning. It was sent out by the Austrian Government accompanied by their own observations, and was followed by a long memorandum setting out in great detail the Austrian case against Serbia.

¹ R. 25.

² E. 64.

The most obvious comment to make on this memorandum—a copy of which will be found in the Austrian Red Book—is that it was too late. It was not, for instance, till Wednesday that Count Mensdorff offered to hand it to Sir Edward Grey. Sir Edward Grey refused to take any notice of it; as he said, it was too late. By that time war had been declared, and the time had gone by when the Powers might with advantage have taken into consideration the quarrel between the two States. The delay in communicating this memorandum can hardly have been accidental; if it was, it was very unfortunate. The explanation probably is that the Austrian Government deliberately did not wish for any impartial review and criticism of their case against Serbia, for had they encouraged this it would have inevitably followed that they could not refuse to receive advice how to deal more wisely with the situation.

It was therefore impossible at the time, and it is still impossible, to come to any conclusion other than that the Note had been originally drawn up in such a way as to make it impossible that it should be accepted; the short time-limit had been included in order to prevent pressure being brought on either Serbia or Austria, and the object of the whole proceedings was not merely to obtain the redress and the guarantees to which Austria had an undoubted right, but to make this the excuse for going to war with Serbia, occupying Serbian territory, and once for all putting her into such a position that she should cease to be able to maintain any appearance of independence of Austria.

This was the condition which brought about Russian mobilisation.

CHAPTER V

MEDIATION

By Saturday evening the three Powers had clearly taken up their position. Austria had broken off diplomatic relations with Serbia, and was thereby committed to the policy of winning her guarantees by war. Germany had proclaimed her solidarity with Austria, and had made it known that she would give her full support, if necessary even in war. Russia had declared that she could not disinterest herself in the fate of Serbia, and had let it be known that if necessary she would intervene to protect her.

If none of the three Powers drew back, if Austria carried out her threat, then war was already unavoidable. The actual cause of dispute was that Austria and Germany did not recognise that Russia was justified in considering herself interested in Serbia. As a German writer has expressed it, "Russia was neither politically nor morally an ally of Serbia." To accept this view was impossible for Russia, and after the publication of the communiqué on Saturday morning every one knew that it was impossible.

What hope was there of an escape from this dilemma? The German plan seems to have been to force Russia to give up the position she had taken up, and to do so in two ways: first by getting France to dissociate herself from her ally; secondly, by intimidation, *i.e.* by letting her know that any attempt to enforce her claim to be consulted would at once lead to war with Austria and Germany.

The other plan, which emanated from Russia and Great Britain, was that the opposing States should agree to submit their differences to the friendly mediation of other Powers. This took two forms: the one a suggestion by Sir Edward Grey that the Powers not immediately interested in the conflict should

mediate between Austria and Russia ; the other, emanating from Russia, that a settlement might be arrived at by separate conversations between Russia and Austria.

We must now follow these attempts to establish mediation.

The time covered by the negotiations was short, but in the space of three days a large number of interviews took place and telegrams were exchanged between all the Governments of Europe. The negotiations were inevitably complicated because the proposals for mediation followed one another so rapidly that the discussion of one had been begun before the last one was concluded. Both, however, were destined to be fruitless ; they were put now in one form, now in another, but whatever form they took they were met by the immovable resistance of Germany and Austria.

None the less they deserve careful study, for they show what persistence, skill and resolution was necessary on the part of the two German Powers if they were to avoid the dangers of mediation.

I

CONFERENCE OF THE FOUR POWERS

From the very beginning Sir Edward Grey had regarded the situation with extreme apprehension. As soon as he was informed that the Austrian Note would have something of the character of an ultimatum, he at once foretold the whole dangerous situation which must inevitably arise from this. He let no time be wasted. That very day he put forward his plan for keeping peace. In the first place he explained it to the French Ambassador.

I told M. Cambon that this afternoon I was to see the German Ambassador, who some days ago had asked me privately to exercise moderating influence in St. Petersburg.

Sir E. Grey to Sir F. Bertie, July 24. I would say to the Ambassador that, of course, if the presentation of this ultimatum to Serbia did not lead to trouble between Austria and Russia, we need not concern ourselves about it ; but, if Russia took the view of the Austrian ultimatum, which it seemed to me that any Power interested in Serbia would take, I should be quite powerless, in face of the terms of the ultimatum, to exercise any moderating influ-

ence. I would say that I thought the only chance of any mediating or moderating influence being exercised was that Germany, France, Italy, and ourselves, who had not direct interests in Serbia, should act together for the sake of peace, simultaneously in Vienna and St. Petersburg.

M. Cambon said that, if there was a chance of mediation by the four Powers, he had no doubt that his Government would be glad to join in it; but he pointed out that we could not say anything in St. Petersburg till Russia had expressed some opinion or taken some action. But, when two days were over, Austria would march into Serbia, for the Serbians could not possibly accept the Austrian demand. Russia would be compelled by her public opinion to take action as soon as Austria attacked Serbia, and therefore, once the Austrians had attacked Serbia, it would be too late for any mediation.

I said that I had not contemplated anything being said in St. Petersburg until after it was clear that there must be trouble between Austria and Russia. I had thought that if Austria did move into Serbia, and Russia then mobilised, it would be possible for the four Powers to urge Austria to stop her advance, and Russia also to stop hers, pending mediation. But it would be essential for any chance of success for such a step that Germany should participate in it.

M. Cambon said that it would be too late after Austria had once moved against Serbia. The important thing was to gain time by mediation in Vienna. The best chance of this being accepted would be that Germany should propose it to the other Powers.

I said that by this he meant a mediation between Austria and Serbia.

He replied that it was so.

I said that I would talk to the German Ambassador this afternoon on the subject.¹

See also the account of this conversation by M. Cambon.

Sir Edward Grey having discussed with me his desire to leave no stone unturned to avert the crisis, we agreed in thinking that the English Cabinet might ask the German Government to take the initiative in approaching Vienna with the object of offering the mediation, between Austria and Serbia, of the four Powers which are not directly interested. If Germany agrees, time will be gained, and this is the essential point.

I mentioned the matter to my Russian colleague, who is afraid of a surprise from Germany, and who imagines that Austria would not have despatched her ultimatum without previous agreement with Berlin.²

¹ E. 10.

² F. 32.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 24.

It will be seen that there is some difference between the two points of view, and M. Cambon's account of the conversation is not quite accurate. Sir E. Grey had in mind mediation between Austria and Russia; M. Cambon between Austria and Serbia. Sir E. Grey did not see his way to propose to interfere at all between Austria and Serbia, and kept his mind fixed on the more serious situation which would arise when it had developed into an Austro-Russian antagonism. M. Cambon, on the other hand, feared that if the struggle with Serbia was allowed to develop, and mediation was postponed till Russia had come in, it would then be too late. The essential point is that both were agreed that the other Powers might make their voices heard, and there was no reason why mediation should not be offered at both the earlier and later stages—but we shall see that Sir E. Grey was right, and that it soon was proved that no intervention between Austria and Serbia would be practicable. But M. Cambon was also right; for when Russia and Austria had both mobilised it was too late.

The same day Sir E. Grey discussed the situation with the German Ambassador, and, as he had promised, made the suggestion to him in the form in which he had originally conceived it.

I said that if the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia did not lead to trouble between Austria and Russia I had no concern with it; I had heard nothing yet from St. Petersburg, but I
 Sir E. Grey to Sir H. Rumbold, July 24. was very apprehensive of the view Russia would take of the situation. I reminded the German Ambassador that some days ago he had expressed a personal hope that if need arose I would endeavour to exercise moderating influence at St. Petersburg, but now I said that, in view of the extraordinarily stiff character of the Austrian Note, the shortness of the time allowed, and the wide scope of the demands upon Serbia, I felt quite helpless as far as Russia was concerned, and I did not believe any Power could exercise influence alone.

The only chance I could see of mediating or moderating influence being effective, was that the four Powers, Germany, Italy, France, and ourselves, should work together simultaneously at Vienna and St. Petersburg in favour of moderation in the event of the relations between Austria and Russia becoming threatening.

The immediate danger was that in a few hours Austria might march into Serbia and Russian Slav opinion demand that Russia should march to help Serbia; it would be very desirable to get

Austria not to precipitate military action and so to gain more time. But none of us could influence Austria in this direction unless Germany would propose and participate in such action at Vienna. You should inform Secretary of State.¹

Sir Horace Rumbold on this made a communication to the German Secretary of State. At this time the latter seems to have expressed himself in a manner favourable to the suggestion, for he said that :

If the relations between Austria and Russia became threatening, he was quite ready to fall in with your suggestion as to the four Powers working in favour of moderation at Vienna and St. Petersburg.²

Sir H. Rumbold,
July 25.

The next day Sir Edward Grey referred to the point in another telegram to Sir Horace Rumbold.

Apparently we should now soon be face to face with the mobilisation of Austria and Russia. The only chance of peace, if this did happen, would be for Germany, France, Russia, and ourselves to keep together, and to join in asking Austria and Russia not to cross the frontier till we had had time to try and arrange matters between them.

Sir E. Grey to
Sir H. Rumbold,
July 25.

The German Ambassador read me a telegram from the German Foreign Office saying that his Government had not known beforehand, and had had no more than other Powers to do with the stiff terms of the Austrian Note to Serbia, but once she had launched that Note, Austria could not draw back. Prince Lichnowsky said, however, that if what I contemplated was mediation between Austria and Russia, Austria might be able with dignity to accept it. He expressed himself as personally favourable to this suggestion.

I concurred in his observation, and said that I felt I had no title to intervene between Austria and Serbia, but as soon as the question became one as between Austria and Russia, the peace of Europe was affected, in which we must all take a hand.

I impressed upon the Ambassador that, in the event of Russian and Austrian mobilisation, the participation of Germany would be essential to any diplomatic action for peace. Alone we could do nothing. The French Government were travelling at the moment, and I had had no time to consult them, and could not therefore be sure of their views, but I was prepared, if the German Government agreed with my suggestion, to tell the French Government that I thought it the right thing to act upon it.³

¹ E. 11.

² E. 18.

³ E. 25.

It will be noticed that Prince Lichnowsky expressed himself on the whole favourably to the suggestion, on the assumption that there should be no intervention between Austria and Serbia, but only between Austria and Russia.

The same day Sir Edward Grey telegraphed to Sir G. Buchanan :

The sudden, brusque, and peremptory character of the Austrian *démarche* makes it almost inevitable that in a very short time

Sir E. Grey to Sir G. Buchanan, July 25. both Russia and Austria will have mobilised against each other. In this event, the only chance of

peace, in my opinion, is for the other four Powers to join in asking the Austrian and Russian Governments not to cross the frontier, and to give time for the four Powers acting at Vienna and St. Petersburg to try and arrange matters. If Germany will adopt this view, I feel strongly that France and ourselves should act upon it. Italy would no doubt gladly co-operate.

No diplomatic intervention or mediation would be tolerated by either Russia or Austria unless it was clearly impartial and included the allies or friends of each. The co-operation of Germany would therefore be essential.¹

And the suggestion was also communicated the same day to M. Sazonof by Count Benckendorff:

Grey has told the German Ambassador that in his opinion Austrian mobilisation must lead to Russian mobilisation, that

Count Benckendorff, July 25. grave danger of a general war will thereupon arise, and that he sees only one means of reaching a

peaceful settlement, namely, that, in view of the Austrian and Russian mobilisations, Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain should abstain from immediate mobilisation, and should at once offer their good offices. Grey told me that the first essential of this plan was the consent of Germany and her promise not to mobilise. He has therefore, as a first step, made an inquiry on this point at Berlin.²

He also mentioned it in conversation to the Italian Ambassador, who "cordially approved of this,"³ and in a telegram of the next day Sir Rennell Rodd said that the Italian Government welcomed the proposal.⁴

The special character of this proposal must be noticed ; it is based on the assumption that Russia and Austria will almost

¹ E. 24.

² R. 22.

³ E. 29.

⁴ E. 35.

immediately have mobilised against one another. "Apparently we should now soon be face to face with mobilisation of Russia and Austria." It belonged, therefore, logically to rather a later stage than that at which it was first propounded, but from the first Sir Edward Grey had rightly anticipated that Russia would refuse to allow Austria a free hand as against Serbia. He saw that Austria would not draw back; nothing, therefore, could avert the mobilisation of these two Great Powers against one another. If this took place then in accordance with the terms of the alliances, Germany must be drawn on the one side and France on the other, and the whole European question be opened. This, however, would be avoided if the other four Powers had already before this critical stage was reached agreed not themselves to mobilise but to enter into arrangements for concerted action, first to stop Austria and Russia from beginning war, and secondly, to profit by the delay thereby secured in order to bring about some solution of the difficulty.

The great importance of this treatment lies in the idea that the concert of Europe would be at once substituted for the two hostile alliances. Without prejudicing their future action if the proposal failed, Germany would for the moment be detached from the side of Austria, France from the side of Russia; they would not approach the question as partisans each backing up her ally, but as colleagues in the attempt to find a solution.

The proposal in fact had in it the germ not only of solving the immediate difficulty, but also of freeing Europe from the incubus under which it must remain so long as every question was regarded merely from the point of view of two hostile alliances. It would restore the grouping of the Powers by which the dangers of war had been overcome during the last Balkan crisis.

It was clear from the first that the effectiveness of this action depended entirely on the action of Germany; if she accepted, then the discussion could at once begin; if she refused, then everything would have to fall back into the same hopeless position in which affairs already were. France and England could only bring pressure to bear on Russia if they knew that Germany was doing her best to hold back Austria.

On Sunday, after receiving from Germany the encouraging answer already quoted, Sir Edward Grey converted the suggestions into an official proposal which was communicated to

Berlin, Rome,¹ and Paris; it was now put in a more definite form that "the Ambassadors at London should join with himself in a conference at London for the purpose of discovering an issue which would prevent complications." He adds that if the Ministers concerned agreed, they should be asked whether their "representatives should be authorised to request that all active military operations should be suspended pending results of conference."²

A definite form is thereby given to the suggestion so as to enable it to be put into effect immediately, but at the same time the basis on which the discussions should be begun is left open.

The proposal was at once cordially accepted by Italy³ and by France.

The English Ambassador has communicated to me Sir E. Grey's proposal for common action by England, Germany, France, and Italy at Vienna, Belgrade, and St. Petersburg, to stop active military operations while the German, Italian, and French Ambassadors at London examine, with Sir Edward Grey, the means of finding a solution for the present complications.

M. Bienvenu-
Martin to M. de
Fleuriau,
July 27.

I have this morning directed M. Jules Cambon to talk this over with the English Ambassador at Berlin, and to support his *démarche* in whatever form he should judge suitable.

I authorise you to take part in the meeting proposed by Sir E. Grey. I am also ready to give to our representatives at Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Belgrade instructions in the sense asked for by the English Government.

At the same time I think that the chances of success of Sir E. Grey's proposal depend essentially on the action that Berlin would be disposed to take at Vienna; a *démarche* from this side, promoted with a view to obtain a suspension of military operations, would appear to me doomed to failure if Germany's influence were not first exercised.

I have also noted, during Baron von Schoen's observations, that the Austro-Hungarian Government was particularly susceptible when the words "mediation," "intervention," "conference" were used, and was more willing to admit "friendly advice" and "conversations."⁴

For this to become effective it only remained that Germany should accept it.

¹ F. 55.

² E. 36.

³ E. 49.

⁴ F. 70. See also E. 51 and 52.

At this stage, however, the proposal was crossed by another which emanated from St. Petersburg to the effect that there should be direct negotiations between Austria and Russia.

II

CONVERSATIONS WITH AUSTRIA

This suggestion originated in an important conversation which took place during the course of Sunday between M. Sazonof and the Austrian Ambassador. We have accounts of this from both sides. Count Szápáry telegraphed :

Just had a long conversation with M. Sazonof. Told the Minister I was under the impression that mistaken ideas were prevalent in Russia with regard to the character of our action. That we were credited with wishing to push forward into Balkan territory, and to begin a march to Salonica or even to Constantinople. Others, again, went so far as to describe our action merely as the starting-point of a preventive war against Russia. I said that all this was erroneous, and that parts of it were absolutely unreasonable. The goal of our action was self-preservation and self-defence against hostile propaganda by word, in writing, and in action, which threatened our integrity. It would occur to no one in Austria-Hungary to threaten Russian interests, or indeed to pick a quarrel with Russia. And yet we were absolutely determined to reach the goal which we had set before us, and the path which we had chosen seemed to us the most suitable. As, however, the action under discussion was action in self-defence, I could not conceal from him that we could not allow ourselves to be diverted in it by any consequences, of whatever kind they might be.

M. Sazonof agreed with me. Our goal, as I had described it to him, was an entirely legitimate one, but he considered that the path which we were pursuing with a view to attaining it was not the surest. He said that the Note which we had delivered was not happy in its form. He had since been studying it, and if I had time he would like to look it through once more with me. I remarked that I was at his service, but was not authorised either to discuss the text of the Note with him or to interpret it. Of course, however, his remarks were of interest. The Minister then took all the points of the Note in order, and on this occasion found seven of the ten points admissible without very great difficulty ; only the two points dealing with the collaboration of the Imperial

and Royal officials in Serbia and the point dealing with the removal of officers and civil servants to be designated by us, seemed to him to be unacceptable in their present form. With regard to the two first points, I was in a position to give an authentic interpretation in the sense of your Excellency's telegram of the 25th instant;¹ with regard to the third, I expressed the opinion that it was a necessary demand. Moreover, matters had already been set in motion. The Serbians had mobilised on the previous day, and I did not know what had happened since then.²

M. Sazonof's account is confined to the latter part of the conversation, namely, the detailed analysis of the Austrian Note; and it ends with the important conclusion that there should be an authorised exchange of views in order to redraft certain Articles of the Note :

I had a long and friendly conversation to-day with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador. After discussing the ten demands addressed to Serbia, I drew his attention to the fact that, quite apart from the clumsy form in which they were presented, some of them were quite impracticable, even if the Serbian Government agreed to accept them. . . . In the interest of the maintenance of peace, which, according to the statements of Szápáry, is as much desired by Austria as by all the Powers, it was necessary to end the tension of the present moment as soon as possible. With this object in view it seemed to me most desirable that the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador should be authorised to enter into a private exchange of views in order to redraft certain Articles of the Austrian Note of the 10th/23rd July in consultation with me. This method of procedure would perhaps enable us to find a formula which would prove acceptable to Serbia, while giving satisfaction to Austria in respect of the chief of her demands. Please convey the substance of this telegram to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in a judicious and friendly manner.³

Count Pourtalès refers to this conversation, but he omits all mention of the proposals for negotiation, the one important result that arises out of it:

¹ A. 27.

² A. 31. This is dated July 27th; this is clearly a mistake; the conversation, according to all other accounts, took place on Sunday the 26th.

³ R. 25.

To-day the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador had a long conversation with Sazonof. Both had, as they afterwards said to him, a satisfactory impression. The assurance of the Count Pourtales, Ambassador that Austria-Hungary had no plans for conquest and only wished to have peace on its frontier, visibly calmed the Minister.¹

We have other accounts from the French and English Ambassadors.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs continues with praiseworthy perseverance to seek means to bring about a peaceful solution.

"Up to the last moment," he declared to me, "I shall show myself ready to negotiate."

M. Paléologue,
July 26.

It is in this spirit that he has just sent for Count Szápáry to come to a "frank and loyal explanation." M. Sazonof commented in his presence on the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, article by article, making clear the insulting character of the principal clauses. "The intention which inspired this document," he said, "is legitimate if you pursued no aim other than the protection of your territory against the intrigues of Serbian anarchists; but the procedure to which you have had recourse is not defensible." He concluded: "Take back your ultimatum, modify its form, and I will guarantee you the result."

The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador showed himself moved by this language; however, while awaiting instructions, he reserves the opinion of his Government. Without being discouraged M. Sazonof has decided to propose this evening to Count Berchtold the opening of direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg on the changes to be introduced into the ultimatum.

This friendly and semi-official interposition of Russia between Austria and Serbia has the advantage of being expeditious. I therefore believe it to be preferable to any other procedure and likely to succeed.²

Austrian Ambassador tried, in a long conversation which he had yesterday with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to explain away objectionable features of the recent action taken

by the Austro-Hungarian Government. Minister

Sir G. Buchanan,
July 27.

for Foreign Affairs pointed out that, although he perfectly understood Austria's motives, the ultimatum had been so drafted that it could not possibly be accepted as a whole by the Serbian Government. Although the demands were reasonable

¹ G. 5. On the other hand there is a statement in the English Blue Book (E. 78) to the effect that M. Sazonof had made this proposal on the suggestion of the German Ambassador.

² F. 54.

enough in some cases, others not only could not possibly be put into immediate execution seeing that they entailed revision of existing Serbian laws, but were, moreover, incompatible with Serbia's dignity as an independent State. It would be useless for Russia to offer her good offices at Belgrade, in view of the fact that she was the object of such suspicion in Austria. In order, however, to put an end to the present tension, he thought that England and Italy might be willing to collaborate with Austria. The Austrian Ambassador undertook to communicate his Excellency's remarks to his Government.¹

Since my conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as reported in my telegram of to-day, I understand that His Excellency has proposed that the modifications to
 Sir G. Buchanan,
 July 27. be introduced into Austrian demands should be the subject of direct conversation between Vienna and St. Petersburg.²

This naturally altered the situation as to the proposal put forward by Sir Edward Grey. Russia preferred direct conversations; if, however, he wished, she would be ready to stand aside and support the English proposal.

I asked [M. Sazonof] if he had heard of your proposal with regard to conference of the four Powers, and on his replying in the affirmative, I told him confidentially of your instructions to me, and inquired whether instead of such
 Sir G. Buchanan,
 July 27. a conference he would prefer a direct exchange of views, which he had proposed. The German Ambassador, to whom I had just spoken, had expressed his personal opinion that a direct exchange of views would be more agreeable to Austria-Hungary.

His Excellency said he was perfectly ready to stand aside if the Powers accepted the proposal for a conference, but he trusted that you would keep in touch with the Russian Ambassador in the event of its taking place.³

The British Ambassador has inquired whether we think it desirable that Great Britain should take the initiative in summoning a conference in London of the representatives of Great Britain, France, Germany, and
 M. Sazonof,
 July 27. Italy to examine the possibility of finding a way out of the present situation.

I replied to the Ambassador that I had begun conversations with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador under conditions which, I hoped, might be favourable. I had not, however, received as yet any reply to my proposal for the revision of the Note by the two Cabinets.

¹ E. 44.

² E. 45.

³ E. 55.

If direct explanations with the Vienna Cabinet proved impossible, I was ready to fall in with the British proposal, or any other proposal of a kind likely to lead to a favourable settlement of the dispute.¹

In England and France the Russian proposal was welcomed with warm approval. Sir Edward Grey considered it preferable to his own.

But as long as there is a prospect of a direct exchange of views between Austria and Russia, I would suspend every other suggestion, as I entirely agree that it is the most preferable method of all.

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 28.

I understand that the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs has proposed a friendly exchange of views to the Austrian Government, and, if the latter accepts, it will no doubt relieve the tension and make the situation less critical. I will keep the idea [of mediation] in reserve until we see how the conversations between Austria and Russia progress.²

It will be seen that the suggestion in its original form was that the discussion should take place at St. Petersburg and should be on the basis of the original Austrian Note; the object was to bring about a redraft of certain of the Articles in it so that it could be made acceptable by Serbia. If this was done, Austria, by some modification in and explanations of her requirements, would make them such that Russia could support them, and Russia would no doubt be able to bring sufficient pressure to bear on Serbia to cause her to accept these terms. In this way Austria would get full satisfaction.

How easy and simple does this solution appear: all that seemed to be required was that the explanations already communicated to Russia should be made in such a way that they might be embodied in a recommendation to the Serbian Government, and should be supplemented by other "explanations" and minor modifications.

An account of the reception of this suggestion at Vienna is given in a telegram from Sir Maurice de Bunsen next day. The Russian Ambassador said that:

He had just heard of a satisfactory conversation which the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs had yesterday with the

¹ R. 32.

² E. 67. See also E. 68 and 96.

Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg. The former had agreed that much of the Austro-Hungarian Note to Serbia had been perfectly reasonable, and in fact they had practically reached an understanding as to the guarantees which Serbia might reasonably be asked to give to Austria-Hungary for her future good behaviour. The Russian Ambassador urged that the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg should be furnished with full powers to continue discussion with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was very willing to advise Serbia to yield all that could be fairly asked of her as an independent Power. Baron Macchio promised to submit this suggestion to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.¹

Sir M. de Bunsen,
July 27.

The German Government do not seem to have regarded this proposal with the same interest as did other Powers. They could not of course disapprove, but at first the language used is cold and reserved.

I begged the Minister for Foreign Affairs to support your proposal in Vienna that Szápáry should be authorised to draw up, by means of a private exchange of views with you, a wording of the Austro-Hungarian demands which would be acceptable to both parties. Jagow answered that he was aware of this proposal and that he agreed with Pourtalès that, as Szápáry had begun this conversation, he might as well go on with it. He will telegraph in this sense to the German Ambassador at Vienna. I begged him to press Vienna with greater insistence to adopt this conciliatory line; Jagow answered that he could not advise Austria to give way.²

M. Bronewsky,
July 27.

To Sir Edward Goschen Herr von Jagow said on Monday :

. . . that news he had just received from St. Petersburg showed that there was an intention on the part of M. de Sazonof to exchange views with Count Berchtold. He thought that this method of procedure might lead to a satisfactory result, and that it would be best, before doing anything else, to await outcome of the exchange of views between the Austrian and Russian Governments.³

Sir E. Goschen,
July 27.

To M. Cambon he spoke more warmly : "for the rest," he added, "direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg are in progress. I expect very good results from them and am hopeful."⁴

¹ E. 56.

² R. 38.

³ E. 43.

⁴ T. 74.

And the next day M. Cambon reports :

M. Sazonof's conversation with Count Szápáry was brought to the knowledge of Herr von Jagow by the Russian Chargé d'Affaires. The Secretary of State told him that M. Jules Cambon, July 28, in agreement with the remarks of the German Ambassador in Russia, since the Austrian Government did not refuse to continue their conversations with the Russian Government after the expiry of the ultimatum, there was ground for hope that Count Berchtold on his side might be able to converse with M. Schebeko, and that it might be possible to find an issue from the present difficulties. The Russian Chargé d'Affaires takes a favourable view of this state of mind, which corresponds to Herr von Jagow's desire to see Vienna and St. Petersburg enter into direct relations and to release Germany. There is ground, however, for asking whether Austria is not seeking to gain time to make her preparations.¹

It may be noted that this proposal at this time is not even mentioned in the text of the German White Book.² As a matter of fact, the only use made of it at Berlin seems to have been that it gave a justification for postponing any serious consideration of Sir Edward Grey's suggestion.

On Monday M. Sazonof received the text of the Serbian answer. On reading it he came to the same conclusion as did every one else concerned ; in a circular despatch to the Russian Ambassadors he says :

It exceeds all our expectations in its moderation, and in its desire to afford the fullest satisfaction to Austria. M. Sazonof, July 27. We do not see what further demands could be made by Austria, unless the Vienna Cabinet is seeking for a pretext for war with Serbia.³

I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon and found him very conciliatory and more optimistic.

¹ F. 81.

² It is, as we have seen, omitted in Count Pourtalès' account of the original conversations and is only mentioned in one of the telegrams. In this the suggestion is communicated to Vienna, but only in a very vague form and without any recommendation for its adoption : "We have at once started mediatory action at Vienna in the sense wished by Sir Edward Grey. In addition to this we have also communicated to Count Berchtold the wish of M. Sazonof for direct conversations with Vienna."

³ R. 33.

He would, he said, use all his influence at Belgrade to induce the Serbian Government to go as far as possible in giving satisfaction to Austria, but her territorial integrity must be guaranteed and her rights as a sovereign State respected, so that she should not become Austria's vassal. He did not know whether Austria would accept friendly exchange of views which he had proposed, but, if she did, he wished to keep in close contact with the other Powers throughout the conversations that would ensue.

He again referred to the fact that the obligations undertaken by Serbia in 1908, alluded to in the Austrian ultimatum, were given to the Powers.¹

It might therefore have been supposed that this very moderate answer from Belgrade would have helped on the direct discussions with Vienna. That, however, was not the case. During Monday no answer arrived from Vienna,² and on Tuesday also the decision of the Austrian Government was awaited in vain. It was indeed on this day that the answer was given, but the telegram in which it was conveyed did not reach St. Petersburg until Wednesday.

During the course of the day Count Berchtold had an interview with the Russian Ambassador ; we have an account of this from both sides.

The Imperial Russian Ambassador spoke to me to-day in order to inform me of his return from short leave in Russia, and at the same time to execute a telegraphic instruction of M. Sazonof. The latter had informed him that he had had a lengthy and friendly discussion with Your Excellency (Your Excellency's telegram of the 27th of this month), in the course of which he had discussed with great readiness the various points of the Serbian answer.³ M. Sazonof was of the opinion that Serbia had gone far in meeting our wishes, but that some of the demands appeared to him entirely unacceptable, a fact which he had not concealed from Your Excellency. It appeared to him under these circumstances that the Serbian reply might properly be regarded as furnishing a starting-point for an understanding to attain which the Russian Government would gladly lend a hand. M. Sazonof therefore desired to propose to me that the exchange of thought with Your Excellency should be

¹ E. 55.

² F. 64.

³ This is incorrect ; the conversation took place before the text of the Serbian reply had been received at St. Petersburg.

continued, and that Your Excellency should receive instructions with this end in view.

In reply, I emphasised that I was unable to concur in such a proposal. No one in our country could understand, nor could he approve, a negotiation with reference to the wording used in the answer which we had designated as unsatisfactory. This was all the more impossible because, as the Ambassador knew, there was a deep feeling of general excitement, which had already mastered public opinion. Moreover, on our side war had to-day been declared against Serbia.

In reply to the explanations of the Ambassador, which culminated in asserting that we should not in any way suppress the admitted hostile opinion in Serbia by a warlike action, but that, on the contrary, we should only increase it, I gave him some insight into our present relations towards Serbia which made it necessary, quite against our will, and without any selfish secondary object, for us to show our restless neighbour, with the necessary emphasis, our earnest intention not to permit any longer a movement which was allowed to exist by the Government, and which was directed against the existence of the Monarchy. The attitude of Serbia after the receipt of our Note had further not been calculated to make a peaceful solution possible, because Serbia, even before it transmitted to us its unsatisfactory reply, had ordered a general mobilisation, and in so doing had already committed a hostile act against us. In spite of this, however, we had waited for three days. Yesterday hostilities were opened against us on the Hungarian frontier on the side of Serbia.

By this act we were deprived of the possibility of maintaining any longer the patience which we had shown towards Serbia. The creation of a fundamental but peaceful amelioration of our relations towards Serbia had now been made impossible, and we were compelled to meet the Serbian provocation in the form which in the given circumstances alone corresponded with the dignity of the Monarchy.¹

I spoke to Count Berchtold to-day in the sense of Your Excellency's instructions. I pointed out to him, in the most friendly manner, how desirable it was to find a solution which, while consolidating good relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia, would give to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy genuine guarantees for its future relations with Serbia.

I drew Count Berchtold's attention to all the dangers to the peace of Europe which an armed conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia would involve.

Count Berchtold replied that he was well aware of the gravity

¹ A. 40.

M. Schebeko,
July 28.

of the situation and of the advantages of a frank explanation with the St. Petersburg Cabinet. He told me that, on the other hand, the Austro-Hungarian Government, who had only decided much against their will on the energetic measures which they had taken against Serbia, could no longer recede, nor enter into any discussion of the terms of the Austro-Hungarian Note.

Count Berchtold added that the crisis had become so acute, and that public opinion had been excited to such a pitch, that the Government, even if they wished it, could no longer consent to such a course. This was all the more impossible, he said, inasmuch as the Serbian reply itself furnished proof of the insincerity of Serbia's promises for the future.¹

His answer was, it will be seen, a definite refusal to accept the Russian proposals.

The reasons given for this refusal seem most insufficient. They are first of all that no negotiation as to the text of the Austrian Note could be permitted, and secondly, that it was now too late; they had waited three days, hostilities had been opened, and must proceed.

The second of these reasons is most unsatisfactory. No reason at all is given why the declaration of war might not have been postponed for at least a day or two longer. The hostilities to which reference is made were of a quite unimportant character; it is not clear whether they were begun by the Austrians or the Serbians, but they were the sort of thing which always occurs on a frontier when the opposing forces are drawn up immediately opposite to one another. The truth obviously is, as Count Berchtold practically admits, that the warlike feeling in Austria was so strong that he did not feel himself able to withstand it and he had therefore to give way to the pressure exercised upon him.

The other point is even more unsatisfactory. Apparently what the Austrians required was that Serbia should now offer her unconditional acceptance. As diplomatic relations had been broken off she could, even if she desired to do so, only offer this through some mediatory Power, that is, in this case, through Russia. The Austrians apparently expected that Russia should advise Serbia to take this step, but this could not be expected unless the Russian Government themselves had the opportunity of going through the

¹ R. 45.

contents of the Note point by point with Austrian representatives, comparing the original demands, the Serbian answer, and the Austrian criticisms, and on each point asking or, and obtaining, such further explanations as might seem desirable. It was quite possible that, in the result of such a discussion on the receipt of the official Austrian explanations, Russia might find herself in the position to advise Serbia to accept the Note, if not in a completely integral form, at least with certain minor alterations of phrasing. This would indeed have been something in the nature of negotiations on the Austrian Note, but to a very large extent the negotiations would have been really the receipt and notification of the Austrian explanations. It is absurd to say that a discussion of this kind would have been inconsistent with the dignity of the Austrian Government; and it is very probable that it would quickly have led to an agreement.

This refusal put an end to the proposal. This, like the suggestion for prolonging the time-limit, had emanated from St. Petersburg, had been supported by France, Italy, and England; it had been coolly treated by Germany, and it was rejected by Austria.¹ Nothing now remained but to press on with Sir Edward Grey's proposals, and M. Sazonov urged this with all the energy at his command.

Austrian Government had now definitely declined direct conversation between Vienna and St. Petersburg. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said he had proposed such an
Sir G. Buchanan,
July 29. exchange of views on advice of German Ambassador.

He proposed, when informing German Ambassador of this refusal of Austria's, to urge that a return should be made to your proposal for a conference of four Ambassadors, or, at all events, for an exchange of views between the three Ambassadors less directly interested, yourself, and also the Austrian Ambassador if you thought it advisable. Any arrangement approved by France and England would be acceptable to him, and he did not care what form such conversations took. No time was to be lost, and the only way to avert war was for you to succeed in arriving,

¹ This proposal for conversations must be clearly distinguished from the later conversations which will be dealt with below and which did not begin until after the definite refusal of the first proposal. See Chapter VIII. The account given by the Chancellor in his despatch of December 24th is dealt with in the appendix.

by means of conversations with Ambassadors either collectively or individually, at some formula which Austria could be induced to accept. Throughout Russian Government had been perfectly frank and conciliatory, and had done all in their power to maintain peace. If their efforts to maintain peace failed, he trusted that it would be realised by the British public that it was not the fault of the Russian Government.¹

At the time of my interview with the German Ambassador, recorded in my preceding telegram, I had not yet received M. Schcbeko's telegram of the 28th July.

M. Sazonof,
July 29.

The contents of this telegram amount to a refusal on the part of the Vienna Cabinet to agree to a direct exchange of views with the Russian Government.

Hence nothing remains for us to do but to rely entirely on the British Government to take the initiative in any steps which they may consider advisable.²

And the French Ambassador telegraphed to his Government :

I am now in a position to assure Your Excellency that the Russian Government will acquiesce in any measures which France and England may propose in order to maintain peace.

M. Paléologue,
July 29.

The direct conversations, to which the Russian Government had invited the Austro-Hungarian Government in a friendly spirit, have been refused by the latter.

In spite of the failure of his proposal, M. Sazonof accepts the idea of a conference of the four Powers in London ; further, he does not attach any importance to the title officially given to the discussions, and will support all English efforts in favour of peace.³

III

The rejection of the conversations left the ground clear for the alternative English suggestion of mediation, and we must follow its history. We left it on Sunday, when it had been definitely formulated, and accepted by Italy and France, and accepted by Russia subject to a preference for the direct conversations. The answer of Germany had not been received.

The action of Berlin is obscure and baffling. The first

¹ E. 78.

² R. 50.

³ F. 86 ; F. 91.

information we have is a telegram of July 24th or 25th as follows :

We know as yet nothing of a suggestion of Sir Edward Grey's to hold a quadruple conference in London. It is impossible for us to place our ally in his dispute with Serbia before a European tribunal. Our mediation must be limited to the danger of an Austro-Russian conflict.¹

Sir Edward Grey had, however, as we have seen, anticipated the misunderstanding implied in this, saying that: "I felt I had no title to intervene between Austria and Serbia, but as soon as the question became one as between Austria and Russia the peace of Europe was affected, in which we must all take a hand."²

This explanation was accepted by the Chancellor in a telegram to the Imperial Ambassador at London on Saturday.

The distinction made by Sir Edward Grey between an Austro-Serbian and an Austro-Russian conflict is perfectly correct. We do not wish to interpose in the former any more than England, and as heretofore we take the position that this question must be localised by virtue of all Powers refraining from intervention. It is therefore our urgent hope that Russia will refrain from any active interference in view of her responsibility and the seriousness of the situation. We are prepared, in the event of an Austro-Russian controversy, while reserving our known duties as allies, to initiate mediation between Russia and Austria jointly with the other Powers.³

This was on Saturday, when the suggestion was in a quite vague and tentative form. On Sunday it was made a firm and definite proposal, in such a way that if accepted it could immediately be put into force. As soon as this was done the German Government took up a very critical attitude, and in fact definitely refused their concurrence.

We are fortunate in having very full accounts of what happened at Berlin on the Monday. First, M. Cambon saw Herr von Jagow; at this time the latter seemed disposed to agree to the proposal.

¹ G. 12. This is dated July 27th, but that is clearly wrong; it must be July 24th or 25th.

² E. 25.

³ G. 13.

To-day I have had a conversation with the Secretary of State on the proposal by England that Germany should join the Cabinets of London, Paris, and Rome to prevent hostilities between St. Petersburg and Vienna.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 27.

I remarked to him that Sir Edward Grey's proposal opened the way to a peaceful issue. . . . Herr von Jagow replied that he was disposed to join in. The intervention proposed by England at St. Petersburg and Vienna could, in his opinion, only come into operation if events were not precipitated. In that case, he does not despair that it might succeed. I expressed my regret that Austria, by her uncompromising attitude, had led Europe to the difficult pass through which we were going, but I expressed the hope that intervention would have its effect.¹

Sir Edward Goschen, who had now returned to Berlin, saw him at a later hour, and Herr von Jagow then gave what was obviously meant to be a definite and final refusal, on the ground that the proposed conference of Ambassadors would amount to a court of arbitration; anyhow, he added, it would be better to await the issue of the conversations which were going on between Vienna and St. Petersburg. On this occasion again he referred to the danger of mobilisation.

Secretary of State says that conference you suggest would practically amount to a court of arbitration and could not, in his opinion, be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia. He could not therefore fall in with your suggestion, desirous though he was to co-operate for the maintenance of peace. I said I was sure that your idea had nothing to do with arbitration, but meant that representatives of the four nations not directly interested should discuss and suggest means for avoiding a dangerous situation. He maintained, however, that such a conference as you proposed was not practicable. He added that news he had just received from St. Petersburg showed that there was an intention on the part of M. de Sazonof to exchange views with Count Berchtold. He thought that this method of procedure might lead to a satisfactory result, and that it would be best, before doing anything else, to await outcome of the exchange of views between the Austrian and Russian Governments.²

Sir E. Goschen,
July 27.

M. Cambon also gives an account of this conversation.

The English Ambassador, who returned to-day, saw the Secretary of State and discussed with him Sir Edward Grey's

¹ F. 67.

² E. 43.

proposal. In his reply Herr von Jagow continued to manifest his desire for peace, but added that he could not consent to anything which would resemble a conference of the Powers ;
M. Jules Cambon, July 27. that would be to set up a kind of court of arbitration, the idea of which would only be acceptable if it were asked for by Vienna and St. Petersburg. Herr von Jagow's language confirms that used by Baron von Schoen to Your Excellency.

In fact, a *démarche* by the four Powers at Vienna and St. Petersburg could be brought about by diplomatic means without assuming the form of a conference and it is susceptible of many modifications ; the important thing is to make clear at Vienna and St. Petersburg the common desire of the four Powers that a conflict should be avoided. A peaceful issue from the present difficulties can only be found by gaining time.¹

M. Cambon saw Herr von Jagow again later on the same day, and we have a long and interesting account of their conversation.

I had a conversation to-day² with the Secretary of State and gave support to the *démarche* which Sir E. Goschen had just made.

M. Jules Cambon, July 27. Herr von Jagow replied to me, as he had to the English Ambassador, that we could not accept the proposal that the Italian, French, and German Ambassadors should be instructed to endeavour to find with Sir Edward Grey a method of resolving the present difficulties, because that would be to set up a real conference to deal with the affairs of Austria and Russia.

I replied to Herr von Jagow that I regretted his answer, but that the great object which Sir Edward Grey had in view went beyond any question of form ; that what was important was the co-operation of England and France with Germany and Italy in a work of peace ; that this co-operation could take effect through common *démarches* at St. Petersburg and at Vienna ; that he had often expressed to me his regret at seeing the two allied groups always opposed to one another in Europe ; that there was here an opportunity of proving that there was a European spirit, by showing four Powers belonging to the two groups acting in common agreement to prevent a conflict.

Herr von Jagow evaded the point by saying that Germany had engagements with Austria. I observed to him that the relations of Germany with Vienna were no closer than those of France with Russia, and that it was he himself who actually was putting the two groups of allies in opposition.

¹ F. 73.

² The English translation has " yesterday," which is incorrect.

The Secretary of State then said to me that he was not refusing to act so as to keep off the Austro-Russian dispute, but that he could not intervene in the Austro-Serbian dispute. "The one is the consequence of the other," I said, "and it is a question of preventing the appearance of a new factor of such a nature as to lead to intervention by Russia."

As the Secretary of State persisted in saying that he was obliged to keep his engagements towards Austria, I asked him if he was bound to follow her everywhere with his eyes blindfolded, and if he had taken note of the reply of Serbia to Austria which the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires had delivered to him this morning. "I have not yet had time," he said. "I regret it. You would see that except on some points of detail Serbia has yielded entirely. It appears then that, since Austria has obtained the satisfaction which your support has procured for her, you might to-day advise her to be content or to examine with Serbia the terms of her reply."

As Herr von Jagow gave me no clear reply, I asked him whether Germany wished for war. He protested energetically, saying that he knew what was in my mind, but that it was wholly incorrect. "You must then," I replied, "act consistently. When you read the Serbian reply, I entreat you in the name of humanity to weigh the terms in your conscience, and do not personally assume a part of the responsibility for the catastrophe which you are allowing to be prepared." Herr von Jagow protested anew, adding that he was ready to join England and France in a common effort, but that it was necessary to find a form for this intervention which he could accept, and that the Cabinets must come to an understanding on this point.

"For the rest," he added, "direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg have been entered upon and are in progress. I expect very good results from them and I am hopeful."

As I was leaving I told him that this morning I had had the impression that the hour of *détente* had struck, but I now saw clearly that there was nothing in it. He replied that I was mistaken; that he hoped that matters were on the right road and would perhaps rapidly reach a favourable conclusion. I asked him to take such action in Vienna as would hasten the progress of events, because it was a matter of importance not to allow time for the development in Russia of one of those currents of opinion which carry all before them.

In my opinion it would be well to ask Sir Edward Grey, who must have been warned by Sir Edward Goschen of the refusal to his proposal in the form in which it was made, to renew it under another form, so that Germany would have no pretext for refusing to associate herself with it, and would have to assume the responsibilities that belong to her in the eyes of England.*

* F. 74.

We have also an account of this from the Russian Chargé d'Affaires.

Before my visit to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day His Excellency had received the French Ambassador, who endeavoured to induce him to accept the British proposal for action in favour of peace, such action to be taken simultaneously at St. Petersburg and at Vienna by Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and France. Cambon suggested that these Powers should give their advice to Vienna in the following terms: "To abstain from all action which might aggravate the existing situation." By adopting this vague formula, all mention of the necessity of refraining from invading Serbia might be avoided. Jagow refused point-blank to accept this suggestion, in spite of the entreaties of the Ambassador, who emphasised, as a good feature of the suggestion, the mixed grouping of the Powers, thanks to which the opposition between the Alliance and the Entente—a matter of which Jagow himself had often complained—was avoided.¹

To the Italian Ambassador Herr von Jagow used similar language, refusing to him also his assent to Sir Edward Grey's proposal. The proposal was then rejected almost as soon as it was made, and rejected apparently without any reference to Austria.

IV

Sir Edward Grey had meanwhile received on Monday the text of the Serbian answer, which he had not seen when he made the first proposal for a conference on Sunday, and in conversation with Prince Lichnowsky he pressed strongly that this might be used as a basis for discussion. Prince Lichnowsky seemed still to be under the impression that the proposal for mediation was one which might be accepted; he was clearly not well informed.

German Ambassador has informed me that German Government accept in principle mediation between Austria and Russia by the four Powers, reserving, of course, their right as an ally to help Austria if attacked. He has also been instructed to request me to use influence in St. Petersburg to localise the war and to keep up the peace of Europe.²

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 27.

¹ R. 39.

² G. 10; see below, p. 149.

I have replied that the Serbian reply went farther than could have been expected to meet the Austrian demands. German Secretary of State has himself said that there were some things in the Austrian Note that Serbia could hardly be expected to accept. I assumed that Serbian reply could not have gone as far as it did unless Russia had exercised conciliatory influence at Belgrade, and it was really at Vienna that moderating influence was now required. If Austria put the Serbian reply aside as being worth nothing and marched into Serbia, it meant that she was determined to crush Serbia at all costs, being reckless of the consequences that might be involved. Serbian reply should at least be treated as a basis for discussion and pause. I said German Government should urge this at Vienna.

I recalled what German Government had said as to the gravity of the situation if the war could not be localised, and observed that if Germany assisted Austria against Russia it would be because, without any reference to the merits of the dispute, Germany could not afford to see Austria crushed. Just so other issues might be raised that would supersede the dispute between Austria and Serbia, and would bring other Powers in, and the war would be the biggest ever known; but as long as Germany would work to keep the peace I would keep closely in touch. I repeated that after the Serbian reply it was at Vienna that some moderation must be urged.¹

It must be noted with regard to this last point that this fresh suggestion was not put forward as an integral part of the mediation by the four Ambassadors; that had been proposed and had already been rejected before this idea had arisen. It was rather a general idea put forward as evidence that, whatever form of mediation were adopted, in the Serbian answer could be found a useful basis of discussion; but the rejection of this latter point would not necessarily involve the rejection of mediation by the four Powers. It must always be remembered that this latter had been originally put forward, not as a means of mediating between Austria and Serbia, but between Austria and Russia, to be used when attempts at settlement on the narrower basis should have failed.²

¹ E. 46.

² Had the conference idea been accepted, the discussions must, of course, have turned on the Serbian question; but they need not have been conducted on an examination of the Austrian Note and the Serbian reply. As will be seen later, the new situation created by the declaration of war could have been accepted and the basis of negotiation would have been: (1) the limits of Austrian occupation; (2) the conditions of

That evening Sir Edward Grey made his statement in the House of Commons;—the situation then was that the assent of France and Italy had been received; Russia had expressed herself ready to fall in with the suggestion, though she preferred the separate conversations if they came to anything, but he was still not sure as to Germany. Sir Edward Goschen's telegram had obviously not been received. It will be noticed that here also the proposal for using the Serbian answer as a basis for discussion is clearly separate from the proposal for the conference itself, and is put forward as an afterthought.¹

On Tuesday morning, therefore, the position was that the English offer had been accepted by Italy and France; accepted by Russia with the proviso that they would prefer separate conversations; but rejected by Germany on the pretext that they could not call Austria to submit to a court of arbitration, while they also preferred the separate conversations.

Sir Edward Grey therefore tried to remove the misapprehensions as to the nature of the conference.

It would [he said] not be an arbitration, but a private and informal discussion to ascertain what suggestion could be made for a settlement. No suggestion would be put forward that had not previously been ascertained to be acceptable to Austria and Russia, with whom the mediating Powers could easily keep in touch through their respective allies.²

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 28.

And in another telegram of the same date :

German Government, having accepted principle of mediation between Austria and Russia by the four Powers, if necessary, I am ready to propose that the German Secretary of State should suggest the lines on which this principle should be applied. I will, however, keep the idea in reserve until we see how the conversations between Austria and Russia progress.³

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 28.

peace to be imposed on Serbia. The two points on which Austria laid stress—that she could not accept mediation between herself and Serbia, and could not accept examination of the Note—would therefore have been met. This is always obscured in the German accounts of the negotiations.

¹ The speech is printed in the Appendix.

² E. 67.

³ E. 68.

The same point was made at Berlin by M. Cambon and Sir E. Goschen, who saw the Secretary of State and discussed the matter with one another. They both pressed that if the German Government objected to mediation on the ground of the form of the conference, the Chancellor should be asked himself to propose the form which it should take.

To-day I gave my support to the *démarche* made by my British colleague with the Secretary of State. The latter replied to me, as he did to Sir Edward Goschen, that it was impossible for him to accept the idea of a kind of conference at London between the Ambassadors of the four Powers, and that it would be necessary to give another form to the English suggestion to procure its realisation. I laid stress upon the danger of delay, which might bring on war, and asked him if he wished for war. He protested, and added that direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg were in progress, and that from now on he expected a favourable result.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 28.

The British and Italian Ambassadors came to see me this morning together, to talk over with me the conversation which they had had with Herr von Jagow yesterday, on the subject of Sir Edward Grey's proposal. To sum up, the Secretary of State used the same language to them as to me; accepting in principle the idea of joining in a *démarche* with England, Italy, and ourselves, but rejecting any idea of a conference.

My colleague and I thought that this was only a question of form, and the British Ambassador is going to suggest to his Government that they should change the wording of their proposal, which might take the character of a diplomatic *démarche* at Vienna and St. Petersburg.

In consequence of the repugnance shown by Herr von Jagow to any *démarche* at Vienna, Sir Edward Grey could put him in a dilemma, by asking him to state himself precisely how diplomatic action by the Powers to avoid war could be brought about.

We ought to associate ourselves with every effort in favour of peace compatible with our engagements towards our ally; but to place the responsibility in the proper quarter, we must take care to ask Germany to state precisely what she wishes.¹

Secretary of State spoke yesterday in the same sense as that reported in my telegram of yesterday to my French and Italian colleagues respecting your proposal. I discussed with my two colleagues this morning his reply, and we found that, while refusing the proposed conference, he had said to all of us that nevertheless he desired to work with us for the maintenance of general peace. We therefore

Sir E. Goschen,
July 28.

¹ F. 81.

deduced that if he is sincere in this wish he can only be objecting to the form of your proposal. Perhaps he himself could be induced to suggest lines on which he would find it possible to work with us.¹

It does not, however, appear that any notice was taken of this or of Sir E. Grey's offer to the German Ambassador; the Chancellor made no positive offer, and while professing to accept the principle of mediation would not accept the form in which it was proposed, nor make any counter-proposal himself. On that evening Sir Edward Goschen saw the Chancellor, who again confirmed in a quite definite form the refusal, while at the same time professing his anxiety to find some peaceful solution.

At invitation of Imperial Chancellor, I called upon His Excellency this evening. He said that he wished me to tell you that he was most anxious that Germany should work together with England for maintenance of general peace, as they had done successfully in the last European crisis. He had not been able to accept your proposal for a conference of representatives of the Great Powers, because he did not think that it would be effective, and because such a conference would in his opinion have had appearance of an "Areopagus" consisting of two Powers of each group sitting in judgment upon the two remaining Powers; but his inability to accept proposed conference must not be regarded as militating against his strong desire for effective co-operation. You could be assured that he was doing his very best both at Vienna and St. Petersburg to get the two Governments to discuss the situation directly with each other and in a friendly way. He had great hopes that such discussions would take place and lead to a satisfactory result, but if the news were true which he had just read in the papers, that Russia had mobilised fourteen army corps in the south, he thought situation was very serious, and he himself would be in a very difficult position, as in these circumstances it would be out of his power to continue to preach moderation at Vienna. He added that Austria, who as yet was only partially mobilising, would have to take similar measures, and if war were to result, Russia would be entirely responsible. I ventured to say that if Austria refused to take any notice of Serbian Note, which, to my mind, gave way in nearly every point demanded by Austria, and which in any case offered a basis for discussion, surely a certain portion of responsibility would rest with her. His Excellency said that he did not wish to discuss Serbian Note, but that Austria's standpoint, and in this he agreed, was that her quarrel with Serbia was

Sir E. Goschen,
July 28.

¹ E. 60.

a purely Austrian concern with which Russia had nothing to do. He reiterated his desire to co-operate with England and his intention to do his utmost to maintain general peace. "A war between the Great Powers must be avoided" were his last words.¹

The next morning Sir Edward Grey repeated his offer in even clearer language, but with the same result; in conversation with Prince Lichnowsky he said:

The German Government had said that they were favourable in principle to mediation between Russia and Austria if necessary.

Sir E. Grey to Sir E. Goschen, July 29. They seemed to think the particular method of conference, consultation or discussion, or even conversations *à quatre* in London too formal a method. I

urged that the German Government should suggest any method by which the influence of the four Powers could be used together to prevent war between Austria and Russia. France agreed, Italy agreed. The whole idea of mediation or mediating influence was ready to be put into operation by any method that Germany could suggest if mine was not acceptable. In fact mediation was ready to come into operation by any method that Germany thought possible if only Germany would "press the button" in the interests of peace.²

No answer was given to this, and no proposal made by which the mediation by the four Powers could be brought into action.

It will be noticed that in the conversations at Berlin more and more stress is laid on the difficulties which might arise from Russian mobilisation, and this is given as a reason why the continuation of negotiations would perhaps be impossible.

The ingenuity of this line taken is remarkable; it entirely ignores the point that the whole stress of Sir Edward Grey's proposal lay in this, that it was intended to meet the situation after Austria and Russia had mobilised. If they did not mobilise then it might be hoped that conversations would continue and lead to a satisfactory result; if they did mobilise, then there was the danger of their mobilisation bringing in its train the mobilisation of France and Germany, which would mean war. The reason given by Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg why it was difficult for him to exercise pressure on Vienna was just the reason which, if he had really wanted to avoid war, would on this occasion have led him to welcome Sir Edward Grey's proposal.

¹ E. 71.

² E. 84.

V

Though the first plan of mediation as between Austria and Russia had been rejected, there still remained the more general suggestion that in some form or other the Serbian reply might become the basis of conversation or mediation. This, as we have seen, had been made on Monday in a telegram to Sir Edward Goschen, and on the same day Sir Edward Grey took up the point in conversation with Count Mensdorff. He pressed strongly that the Serbian reply could not be ignored, and suggested that at least military operations might be postponed.

I said that I could not understand the construction put by the Austrian Government upon the Serbian reply, and I told Count Mensdorff the substance of the conversation that I
*Sir E. Grey to
 Sir M. de Bunsen,
 July 27.* had had with the German Ambassador this morning about that reply.

Count Mensdorff admitted that, on paper, the Serbian reply might seem to be satisfactory; but the Serbians had refused the one thing—the co-operation of Austrian officials and police—which would be a real guarantee that in practice the Serbians would not carry on their subversive campaign against Austria.

I said that it seemed to me as if the Austrian Government believed that, even after the Serbian reply, they could make war upon Serbia anyhow, without risk of bringing Russia into the dispute. If they could make war on Serbia and at the same time satisfy Russia, well and good; but, if not, the consequences would be incalculable. I pointed out to him that I quoted this phrase from an expression of the views of the German Government. I feared that it would be expected in St. Petersburg that the Serbian reply would diminish the tension, and now, when Russia found that there was increased tension, the situation would become increasingly serious. Already the effect on Europe was one of anxiety. I pointed out that our fleet was to have dispersed to-day, but we had felt unable to let it disperse. We should not think of calling up reserves at this moment, and there was no menace in what we had done about our fleet; but, owing to the possibility of a European conflagration, it was impossible for us to disperse our forces at this moment. I gave this as an illustration of the anxiety that was felt. It seemed to me that the Serbian reply already involved the greatest humiliation to Serbia that I had ever seen a country undergo, and it was very disappointing to me that the reply was treated by the Austrian Government as if it were as unsatisfactory as a blank negative.¹

¹ E. 48.

We have another account of this from Count Mensdorff.

I have to-day had the opportunity of explaining at length to Sir Edward Grey that our action is not one of aggression but of self-defence and of self-preservation, and that we Count Mensdorff, July 27. have no intention of making any territorial acquisition, nor of destroying Serbian independence. What we desire is to obtain a certain measure of satisfaction for what has passed, and guarantees for the future.

For this purpose I availed myself of some of the points out of Your Excellency's communications to Count Szápáry.

Sir E. Grey said to me that he was very much disappointed that we were treating the Serbian answer as if it were a complete refusal.

He had believed that this answer would furnish a basis on which the four other Governments could arrive at a peaceful solution.

This was his idea when he proposed a conference.¹

The conference would meet on the assumption that Austria-Hungary as well as Russia would refrain from every military operation during the attempt of the other Powers to find a peaceful issue.

(The declaration of Sir E. Grey in the House of Commons to-day amplifies the project of a conference.) When he spoke of our refraining from military operations against Serbia, I observed that I feared that it was perhaps already too late. The Secretary of State expressed the view that if we were resolved under any circumstances to go to war with Serbia, and if we assumed that Russia would remain quiet, we were taking a great risk. If we could move Russia to remain quiet, he had nothing more to say on the question. If we could not, the possibilities and the dangers were incalculable.

As a symptom of the feeling of unrest he told me that the English Grand Fleet, which was concentrated in Portsmouth after the manœuvres, and which should have dispersed to-day, would for the present remain there. "We had not called in any Reserves, but as they are assembled, we cannot at this moment send them home again."

His idea of a conference had the aim, if possible, of preventing a collision between the Great Powers, and he also aimed at the isolation of the conflict. If, therefore, Russia mobilises and Germany takes action, the conference necessarily breaks down.²

The next morning it was the subject of conversations at Vienna of which we have accounts both from Sir Maurice

¹ This is incorrect; the conference was proposed before Sir E. Grey had seen the Serbian reply.

² A, 38.

de Bunsen and Count Berchtold. These two telegrams should be read with attention. It will be noted that the original proposal for a conference, as made by Sir Edward Grey, was mentioned, but was not the subject of any formal proposal or discussion. It was not at this time, and it never was, officially brought before the Austrian Government. It had been made public by Sir Edward Grey's speech in the House of Commons on Tuesday, and therefore was naturally referred to in conversation, but it had already been rejected by Germany. Unless it had been previously accepted by all four Powers it would not have been in order for the English Government to mention it to the Austrian Government. Germany indeed might have made private and confidential inquiries whether Austria would eventually be prepared to accept some such offer, just as England had sounded Russia, for Germany was Austria's best friend. Even this, however, had apparently not been done. In fact the Austrian Government never, throughout the whole discussions, had any opportunity of considering this suggestion. It was suppressed at the very first stage by Germany, and as we shall see the mention of it was obscured in their own publications.

Count Berchtold therefore gives no opinion upon it, but merely records that it had been referred to. In order to make this clear it will be convenient, while printing the two telegrams *in extenso*, to divide them into two parts. That which deals with the conference proposal is as follows :

I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day in the sense of your telegram of July 27th to Berlin. I avoided the word "mediation," but said that, as mentioned in your speech, which he had just read to me, you had hopes that conversations in London between the four Powers less interested might yet lead to an arrangement which Austro-Hungarian Government would accept as satisfactory and as rendering actual hostilities unnecessary.¹

Sir M. de
Bunsen,
July 28.

The English Ambassador, who discussed matters with me to-day, has, in accordance with his instructions, explained the attitude of Sir E. Grey with regard to our conflict with Serbia as follows:

Count Berchtold,
July 28.

The English Government have followed the previous course of events during the crisis with lively interest, and they attach importance to giving us an assurance that they

¹ E. 62.

entertain sympathy for us in the point of view we have adopted, and that they completely understand the grievances which we have against Serbia.

If England has no ground to make our dispute with Serbia in itself an object of special consideration, nevertheless this question cannot escape the attention of the Cabinet in London, because this conflict may affect wider circles and thereby imperil the peace of Europe.

To this extent England is affected by the question, and it is only on this ground that Sir E. Grey has been led to direct an invitation to the Governments of those countries which are not directly interested in this conflict (Germany, Italy and France), in order to test in common with them by way of a continuous exchange of thought the possibilities of the situation, and to discuss how the differences may be most quickly got over. Following the model given by the London conference during the last Balkan crisis, the Ambassadors of the various States mentioned resident in London should, according to the view of the English Secretary of State, keep themselves in continual contact with him for the purpose indicated. Sir E. Grey had already received answers expressed in very friendly terms from the Governments concerned, in which they concurred in the suggestion put forward.¹

This is all; the question whether this proposal might be accepted is not discussed.

In another telegram (A. 38) Count Berchtold says that "Sir Edward Grey's proposal for a conference, *so far as it refers to our conflict with Serbia*, appears to have been outstripped by events in view of the state of war which has arisen." He here carefully guards himself against saying that Sir Edward Grey's other proposal for mediation between Austria and Russia was ruled out. We do not know whether Austria would have accepted the idea; it is, I think, probable that she would have done so, as soon as it had become evident that she was involved in a dangerous dispute with Russia.²

¹ A. 41.

² See F. 83. "It is held here [at Vienna] that the formula which seemed as if it might obtain the adherence of Germany—'Mediation between Austria and Russia'—is unsuitable, as it alleges a dispute between these two Empires which does not exist up to the present." The Austrian policy at this time was to refuse to believe in the danger from Russia; there is no refusal to accept the mediation idea if they became convinced that there was such a danger. The German refusal is on quite different grounds.

The essential part of the conversation follows. This deals with the later proposal made by Sir Edward Grey, that the beginning of hostilities should be delayed, and then that the time thus gained might be used for an examination of the Austrian Note and the Serbian answer in the hopes that on this basis an understanding might be arrived at. This was a matter on which the Austrian Government could be directly approached.

I added that you had regarded Serbian reply as having gone far to meet just demands of Austria-Hungary; that you thought it constituted a fair basis of discussion during which warlike operations might remain in abeyance, and that Austrian Ambassador in Berlin was speaking in this sense. Minister for Foreign Affairs said quietly, but firmly, that no discussion could be accepted on basis of Serbian Note; that war would be declared to-day, and that well-known pacific character of Emperor, as well as, he might add, his own, might be accepted as a guarantee that war was both just and inevitable. This was a matter that must be settled directly between the two parties immediately concerned. I said that you would hear with regret that hostilities could not now be arrested, as you feared that they might lead to complications threatening the peace of Europe.

In taking leave of His Excellency, I begged him to believe that, if in the course of present grave crisis our point of view should sometimes differ from his, this would arise, not from want of sympathy with the many just complaints which Austria-Hungary had against Serbia, but from the fact that, whereas Austria-Hungary put first her quarrel with Serbia, you were anxious in the first instance for peace of Europe. I trusted this larger aspect of the question would appeal with equal force to His Excellency. He said he had it also in mind, but thought that Russia ought not to oppose operations like those impending, which did not aim at territorial aggrandisement, and which could no longer be postponed.¹

At present it was also the wish of the Secretary of State, if possible, to prevent even at the eleventh hour the outbreak of hostilities between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, and if this were not possible at least to avoid that the conflict should come to a collision involving bloodshed, if necessary, by the Serbians withdrawing without accepting battle. The reply which had reached us from Serbia appeared to offer the possibility that it might provide the basis of an understanding. England would willingly be prepared in this matter to make her influence felt according to our ideas and wishes.

¹ E. 62.

Sir M. de
Bunsen,
July 28.

Count Berothold,
July 28.

I thanked the Ambassador for the communication of Sir E. Grey, and I answered him that I fully appreciated the view of the Secretary of State. His point of view was, however, naturally different from mine, as England was not directly interested in the dispute between us and Serbia, and the Secretary of State could not be fully informed concerning the serious significance which the questions at issue had for the Monarchy. If Sir E. Grey spoke of the possibility of preventing the outbreak of hostilities, this suggestion came too late, since our soldiers were yesterday shot by soldiers from over the Serbian frontier, and to-day war has been declared by us against Serbia. I had to decline to entertain the idea of a discussion based on the Serbian answer. What we asked was the integral acceptance of the ultimatum. Serbia had endeavoured to get out of its difficulty by subterfuges. We knew these Servian methods only too well.

Through the local knowledge which he has gained here, Sir Maurice de Bunsen was in a position to appreciate fully our point of view, and he would be in a position to give Sir E. Grey an accurate representation of the facts.

In so far as Sir E. Grey desired to be of service to the cause of European peace, he would certainly not find any opposition from us. He must, however, reflect that the peace of Europe would not be saved by Great Powers placing themselves behind Serbia, and directing their efforts to securing that she should escape punishment.

For, even if we agreed to entertain such an attempt at an agreement, Serbia would be all the more encouraged to continue on the path it has formerly trod, and this would, in a very short time, again imperil the cause of peace.

The English Ambassador assured me in conclusion that he fully understood our point of view, but, on the other hand, he regretted that, under these circumstances, the desire of the English Government to arrive at an agreement had, for the time being, no prospect of being realised. He hoped to remain in continual communication with me, as that appeared to him, on account of the great danger of a European conflagration, to be of special value.

I assured the Ambassador that I was at all times at his disposal, and thereupon our conversation came to an end.¹

On the same day a telegram came from Berlin communicating to Vienna Sir Edward Grey's proposal that the Serbian reply might be the basis for discussions. This telegram is interesting as it stands nearly alone in the correspondence. It is the one of the few occasions on which we have a com-

¹ A. 41.

munication from Germany to Austria dealing with these different suggestions for mediation. It will be seen that the suggestion is conveyed in the baldest terms, and that it is not accompanied by any advice that the proposal should be accepted. The German Chancellor was profuse in his assurances that he had done all that was possible to urge moderation on the Austrian Cabinet. When we get to the real facts of his communications with them we find that he had in fact used no pressure, made no suggestion, and simply handed on a message in a way which any telegraph clerk might have done.

Information has been received from the Imperial German Ambassador that Sir E. Grey has appealed to the German Government to use their influence with the Imperial and Royal Government, in order to induce them to regard the reply received from Belgrade either as satisfactory, or that they should accept it as a basis for discussion between the Cabinets.

Herr von Tschirschky was commissioned to bring the English proposal before the Vienna Cabinet for their consideration.¹

On this Count Berchtold drew up a circular despatch in which he repeats the points already made in his telegram to Count Mensdorff.

The Imperial and Royal Government have with deep gratitude received information of the communication which the Imperial German Ambassador made to them on the 28th inst. with regard to the request of the English Cabinet that the Imperial German Government should use their influence with the Vienna Cabinet that they might regard the answer from Belgrade either as satisfactory, or as a basis for discussion. So far as concerns what was said by the English Secretary of State to Prince Lichnowsky, the Imperial and Royal Government desire in the first place to draw attention to the fact that the Serbian answer in no way contains an acceptance of all our demands with a single exception, as Sir E. Grey appears to assume, but that it is rather the case that on most points reservations are formulated, which materially detract from the value of the concessions which are made. The points which they decline are, however, precisely those which contain some guarantee for real attainment of the end in view.

The Imperial and Royal Government cannot suppress their

¹ A. 43.

astonishment at the assumption that their action against Serbia was directed against Russia and Russian influence in the Balkans, for this implies the supposition that the propaganda directed against the Monarchy has not merely a Serbian but a Russian origin. We have hitherto rather started from the idea that official Russia has no connection with these tendencies, which are hostile to the Monarchy, and that our present action is directed exclusively against Serbia, while our feelings for Russia, as we can assure Sir E. Grey, are entirely friendly.

Further, the Imperial and Royal Government must point out that to their great regret they are no longer in a position to adopt an attitude towards the Serbian reply in the sense of the English suggestion, since at the time of the step taken by Germany a state of war between the Monarchy and Serbia had already arisen, and the Serbian reply has accordingly already been outstripped by events.

The Imperial and Royal Government take this opportunity of observing that the Royal Serbian Government, even before they communicated their reply, had taken steps towards the mobilisation of the Serbian forces, and thereafter they allowed three days to elapse without showing any inclination to abandon the point of view contained in their reply, whereupon the declaration of war followed on our side.

If the English Cabinet is prepared to use its influence on the Russian Government with a view to the maintenance of peace between the Great Powers, and with a view to the localisation of the war which has been forced upon us by many years of Serbian intrigues, the Imperial and Royal Government could but welcome this.¹

The result was once more a rejection of the proposals. The request that military operations should be postponed is rejected on the ground that it was too late. To use a favourite expression of Count Berchtold, "the proposals had been outstripped by events." It was the same reason which was given on the same day to the Russian Ambassador, and the only comment we need make is that in both cases, if it was too late, it was Austria alone who was responsible.

The other point is simply a repetition of the statement that Austria required unconditional acceptance. She would demand her full pound of flesh. She would not consider any alterations in her demands, however small or if even made merely in order to clear away misunderstandings.

¹ A. 44.

VI

The general result of these negotiations is this: Russia proposed conversations with Vienna on Sunday; after a delay of two days, this was refused on the ground that no discussion could be allowed on the basis of the Austrian ultimatum; it was too late, for war had already been declared.

Sir Edward Grey proposed mediation by the four Powers as between Austria and Russia; this was refused by Germany partly on the ground that direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg were preferable, although at the very time when this answer was given these conversations were being declined, and partly on the ground that it would be impossible to accept anything of the nature of a conference.

Sir Edward Grey then asked the German Government to suggest some other form in which mediation should be started; they entirely ignored this request and made no answer to it.

Sir Edward Grey again suggested that the Serbian reply might form the basis for negotiation or mediation in some form or other; this was refused on the ground that it came too late, that war had been declared, and that Vienna would not accept any discussion on this basis.

Can we draw any conclusion except that the German Government had determined that no mediation of any kind should be allowed, that no request to Austria to suspend her action should be permitted, and that it had been determined between Austria and Germany that war against Serbia should be pressed on with the greatest precipitation, so as to crush Serbia before any interference, diplomatic or military, could be arranged? They had been clearly warned that action of this kind would bring Russia into the field; they had foreseen before the ultimatum was sent that this would probably be the case, but they had determined to run the risk of a European war and they preferred to do this rather than to give way on any point.

This refusal came, however, just at the time when the sinister combination which Sir Edward Grey had foreseen was realised. Austria had now declared war upon Serbia and begun military operations, and as an answer to this Russia at once began to summon reservists to the colours. Owing to German delay

the negotiations had been caught up by mobilisation, and from this time the interest is concentrated on the relations between Berlin and St. Petersburg.

There is one point in the narrative which requires special notice. It will have been seen that both Herr von Jagow and the Chancellor claim throughout to have exerted the greatest pressure on Austria, and done all that was possible to influence her to help in keeping the peace.

They also represent that any attempt to press for mediation will only aggravate the situation and have the effect of driving Austria to precipitate action.

In their own White Book they say, for instance, "We continued our attempts to the utmost, and we advised Vienna to show every possible advance compatible with the dignity of the monarchy"; and again, "Shoulder to shoulder with England we laboured incessantly, and supported every proposal in Vienna from which we hoped to gain the possibility of a peaceable solution of the conflict."

In conversation with Sir Edward Goschen the same point appears repeatedly, "You could be assured that he was doing his very best, both at Vienna and St. Petersburg, to get the two Governments to discuss the situation directly with each other and in a friendly way."

And again on Wednesday he said :

He reminded me that he had told me the other day that he had to be very careful in giving advice to Austria, as any idea that they were being pressed would be likely to cause them to precipitate matters and present a *fait accompli*. This had, in fact, now happened, and he was not sure that his communication of your suggestion that Serbia's reply offered a basis for discussion had not hastened declaration of war.¹

Sir E. Goschen,
July 29.

And again on Friday, "He has done everything possible to attain his object at Vienna, perhaps even rather more than was altogether palatable at the Ballplatz."

These statements give us a strange picture of the relations of the two Powers—Austria going her own way, ready at once to take offence at any suggestion from Germany, precipitating

¹ E. 76.

events as soon as the slightest mediatory advice was offered so as to make it too late, while all the time they depended in the case of war on the support of Germany, which was vital to them ; and Germany, with unaccustomed meekness, accepting the position, allowing her whole safety and future to be put at stake for Austria's benefit, and unwilling to speak the single strong and decisive word which was necessary to warn Austria that there were limits to her complaisance as an ally.

Moreover, these statements place before us a serious difficulty ; it would have been thought that if they were true some kind of evidence or corroboration of them would have been available. This is far from being the case. Neither in the documents published by the German Government in the appendix to their own White Book nor in the Austrian Red Book is there a single statement which can be appealed to as evidence. We have several documents bearing on the matter, but in every case they consist simply of a bare communication to Vienna of proposals for mediation ; in not a single case are they as published accompanied by any kind of recommendation that the proposal should be accepted. To quote one or two. Exhibit 15 of the German White Book reads as follows :

We have at once started the mediation proposal in Vienna in the sense as desired by Sir Edward Grey. We have communicated besides to Count Berchtold the desire of M. Sazonof for a direct parley with Vienna.

In the Austrian Red Book we have more than one similar communication—for instance, No. 43 ; this, however, simply conveys one of the English proposals with the addendum “ Herr von Tschirschky was commissioned to bring the English proposal before the Vienna Cabinet for their consideration.” Another case is Austria No. 51, but this again simply consists of a communication without any recommendation.

How are we to interpret this discrepancy ? The full explanation of the difficulty cannot obviously at present be given ; when the time comes it will be the duty of the German and the Austrian peoples to demand that the veil which at present hides the communications between the two Governments shall be removed. Our information is still very defective.

We must assume that there were repeated communications

passing between the two Governments, partly in written despatches, partly in more informal conversations with the respective ambassadors, partly in informal letters and telegrams, and partly even perhaps by means of telephone. Till we know more we can only guess at the truth. We may probably assume that the Emperor of Austria and Count Berchtold were themselves sincerely desirous that peace should be maintained, and that they should be enabled to get what they considered their just demands from Serbia without a general war. We cannot, however, ignore the constant statements that the German Ambassador at Vienna, through whom many of the communications must have passed, was himself one of the chief advocates of extreme measures; that he had been privy to the drafting of the Austrian Note and had used his influence, not to soften but to sharpen it. We must also remember that at the Friedjung trial he had been working in close association with Count Forgách, who may be regarded as one of the ablest instruments of the extreme anti-Serbian and anti-Russian policy. We must also remember that the policy of Vienna was undoubtedly to a very large extent directed from Buda Pesth, and that though Count Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, would not be in official communication with the German Government there is no doubt that he was in constant communication with many of those who wielded the chief influence both in political and military affairs at Berlin. It is therefore perfectly possible that the German Chancellor would have desired to bring about a peaceable solution, but that whenever he threw out feelers in this direction he became conscious of the existence behind the throne at Vienna of a very influential party which was advocating an implacable resistance. If this was the case it is quite probable that any suggestion made by him to Count Berchtold to accept proposals for mediation would, as he states was the case, only have the result that the war party at Vienna would at once create a situation which made all peaceable arrangements impossible.

None the less we cannot doubt that, if a peaceful policy had been urged from Berlin with the full and convinced support of the whole German Government, the influence of Germany would have been strong enough to bring the Austrian Government to adopt it. We must therefore believe that if the

Chancellor's statements are true (and we should prefer to believe that they are true) the real explanation of the difficulty in which he found himself was that he was always conscious that the war party in Vienna, and especially in Buda Pesth, was as a matter of fact receiving support from Berlin itself, and that his efforts at peace, if they were genuine, were really being counteracted by military influences both in the Government and the Court which were strengthening the resolutions at Buda Pesth and Vienna.

APPENDIX

The explanation given by the German Government in the White Book as to the collapse of Sir Edward Grey's proposals for a conference is inconsistent both with the facts and with the documents which they themselves publish.

On page 6 we read :

On July 26th, Sir Edward Grey had made the proposal to submit the differences between Austria-Hungary and Serbia to a conference of the Ambassadors of Germany, France, and Italy under his chairmanship. We declared in regard to this proposal that we could not, however much we approved the idea, participate in such a conference, as we could not call Austria in her dispute with Serbia before a European tribunal.

This is justified by a reference to a telegram dated July 27th as follows :

We know as yet nothing of a suggestion of Sir Edward Grey's to hold a quadruple conference in London. It is impossible for us to place our ally in his dispute with Serbia before a European tribunal. Our mediation must be limited to the danger of an Austro-Russian conflict.

But there is also included in the White Book a telegram sent on Saturday the 25th in which the Chancellor himself says that he agrees with Sir Edward Grey that if there is to be intervention it must be in an Austro-Russian and not an Austro-Serbian dispute.

The distinction made by Sir Edward Grey between an Austro-Serbian and an Austro-Russian conflict is perfectly correct. We do not wish to interpose in the former any more than England, and as heretofore we take the position that this question must be localised by virtue of all Powers refraining from intervention. It is therefore our hope that Russia will refrain from any action in view of her responsibility and the seriousness of the situation. We are prepared, in the event of an Austro-Russian controversy, quite apart from our known duties as allies, to intercede between Russia and Austria jointly with the other Powers.

If there was an agreement between London and Berlin on this point on the 25th how are we to explain the statement in the text and in the telegram of the 27th?

It is, moreover, perfectly clear that both the Secretary of State and the Chancellor perfectly well understood that Sir Edward Grey's proposal was to come into effect when there was a conflict between Austria and Russia. The reasons for rejecting Sir Edward Grey's proposal as given at Berlin are always quite consistent; in every one of the conversations, whether with the Chancellor or the Secretary of State, with Sir Edward Goschen or M. Cambon, the same answer is given. "The Chancellor had not been able to accept your proposal for a conference of representatives of the Great Powers because such a conference would in his opinion have had appearance of an "Areopagus" consisting of two Powers of each group sitting in judgment upon the two remaining Powers."¹

There was and there can have been no misapprehension, yet the official statement of the German Government gives a quite definitely false account of the whole matter.

Moreover, by misrepresenting the proposal they are able to throw the blame for rejecting it on Austria. "It foundered upon Austria declining it, as was to be expected." This is untrue; Austria never declined it, she never had the opportunity of doing so. What she declined was negotiations on the Serbian Note, but, as we have seen, Count Berchtold carefully guards himself against declining the other proposal. "Sir Edward Grey's proposal for a conference, so far as it refers to our conflict with Serbia, appears to have been outstripped by events, in view of the state of war which has arisen." In conversation the Chancellor did not take this line; he took the responsibility for rejecting the proposal entirely upon his own shoulders.

Now the German White Book is the official account of the negotiations presented to the Reichstag immediately after the declaration of war. It is to this day the only source of information open to the German people. It was clearly drawn up so as to make them believe that the Government had done all they could to keep peace, but that war was thrust upon them. In order to produce this effect they have had to misrepresent the facts; had the people been told the truth the question would at once have been asked why Sir Edward Grey's proposals for mediation were not accepted. To this question no answer could have been given.

No answer has yet been given. Why was the conference proposal rejected? Up to the Monday morning the attitude at Berlin was on the whole favourable; on Monday afternoon comes a change. Something must have happened on this day. Herr von Jagow must have been told not to continue the encouraging language which he had hitherto used. Who was responsible for this? who was the unseen power that was throughout controlling the negotiations? we do not know. Whoever it

¹ E. 71,

was, the proposal was rejected for the same reason that the Austrian Note to Serbia assumed its final form, for the same reason that the short time-limit was put in and the request for prolongation refused. There is only one possible explanation—it was refused because it would have secured peace.

This could not be avowed ; the Chancellor, in obedience to his orders, had therefore to make up some reason for his action ; no satisfactory reason could be given, and hence we find him struggling with the impossible attempt to find a justification for a policy with which he probably disagreed.

CHAPTER VI

GERMAN EFFORTS FOR PEACE

WE have so far traced the steps by which the three Entente Powers attempted to find some peaceful settlement of the problem which was disturbing Europe. They all have this in common, that, recognising that there is a real and serious point of dispute both between Austria and Serbia and between Austria and Russia, they aim at providing a fair settlement by the friendly mediation of other States.

It must, however, not be supposed that during these days Germany was inactive. She found it indeed necessary for one reason or another to refuse her assent to the English proposals, but she was making at the same time a very real effort to keep the peace.

In the case of any international conflict three alternatives present themselves. The first is arbitration, mediation, compromise—call it what one will; the second is in a way simpler, it is that one side shall give way and submit to the demands of the other; the third is war. The English solution was the first, the German the second. And who can say that it was not a peaceful solution? If Russia would withdraw her opposition, accept the whole position taken up by Austria, leave Serbia to her fate, why then peace would be maintained; and if Germany and the German Emperor could bring this about then they might claim the gratitude of Europe; the quarrel would have been localised, peace preserved.

In order to achieve this three methods were available—persuasion, isolation, intimidation.

That of persuasion had been tried by Austria, representations had been made that Austrian plans contained nothing dangerous to Russia. This had failed, and the publication of a statement in the papers had made any retreat by Russia impossible.

There remained isolation and intimidation.

The end desired would be secured if Great Britain and France would agree to the German point of view, and join with Germany in using pressure to induce Russia to withdraw her opposition; this would bring with it the possibility that if Russia persisted she might find herself alone in Europe, deserted by her ally. Then, of course, she would be forced to submit.

I

This point was pressed with much more force and persistency at Paris than at London, and Baron von Schoen took a much more determined attitude than Prince Lichnowsky. He took France under a disadvantage, for those responsible for the charge of Foreign Affairs were absent.

On Friday he called at the Foreign Office and read the German circular Note. M. Bienvenu-Martin, the acting Director, after hearing the Note, said :

I called the German Ambassador's attention to the fact that while it might appear legitimate to demand the punishment of all those who were implicated in the crime of Sarajevo, on the other hand it seemed difficult to require measures which could not be accepted, having regard to the dignity and sovereignty of Serbia; the Serbian Government, even if it was willing to submit to them, would risk being carried away by a revolution.

I also pointed out to Herr von Schoen that his Note only took into account two hypotheses : that of a pure and simple refusal or that of a provocative attitude on the part of Serbia. The third hypothesis (which would leave the door open for an arrangement) should also be taken into consideration; that of Serbia's acceptance and of her agreeing at once to give full satisfaction for the punishment of the accomplices and full guarantees for the suppression of the anti-Austrian propaganda so far as they were compatible with her sovereignty and dignity.

I added that if within these limits the satisfaction desired by Austria could be admitted, the means of obtaining it could be examined; if Serbia gave obvious proof of goodwill it could not be thought that Austria would refuse to take part in the conversation.

Perhaps they should not make it too difficult for third Powers, who could not either morally or sentimentally cease to take interest in Serbia, to take an attitude which was in accord with the wishes of Germany to localise the dispute.

Herr von Schoen recognised the justice of these considerations and vaguely stated that hope was always possible. When I asked him if we should give to the Austrian Note the character of a simple *mise en demeure*, which permitted a discussion, or an ultimatum, he answered that personally he had no views.¹

On Saturday there were further discussions, based on the original German Note, and the German Ambassador came to protest against the suggestion which had been made in the Press that his communication was of the nature of a threat. On Sunday he came again in order to urge that France should associate herself with Germany in bringing pressure to bear on Russia.

The German Ambassador came this afternoon to make a communication to me relating to an intervention by France with Russia in a pacific sense. "Austria," he said to me, "has declared to Russia that she was not pursuing any territorial aggrandisement nor any attack on the integrity of the Kingdom of Serbia; her only intention is to ensure her own tranquillity and to take police measures. The prevention of war depends on the decision of Russia; Germany feels herself identified with France in the ardent desire that peace may be maintained, and has the firm hope that France will use her influence in this sense at St. Petersburg."

I replied to this suggestion that Russia was moderate, that she had not committed any act which allowed any doubt as to her moderation, and that we were in agreement with her in seeking a peaceful solution of the dispute. It therefore appeared to us that Germany on her side ought to act at Vienna, where her action would certainly be effective, with a view to avoiding military operations leading to the occupation of Serbia.

The Ambassador having observed to me that this could not be reconciled with the position taken up by Germany "that the question concerned only Austria and Serbia," I told him that the mediation at Vienna and St. Petersburg could be the act of the four other Powers less interested in the question.

Herr von Schoen then entrenched himself behind his lack of instructions in this respect, and I told him that in these conditions I did not feel myself in a position to take any action at St. Petersburg alone.

The conversation ended by the renewed assurances of the Ambassador of the peaceful intention of Germany, whom he declared to be on this point identified with France.²

¹ F. 28.

² F. 56.

The point is an interesting and important one ; Germany, professing desire for peace, pressed France to join with her in influencing Russia. The French Minister answered that the influence of Germany ought to be brought to bear upon Vienna. He was twice met with the stereotyped answer that Germany had made up her mind that Russia should be no party to the question, it was a *chose jugée* ; against this decision by Germany there could be no appeal, and when pressed, the Ambassador fell back on his lack of instructions. He was not, however, satisfied, and he came back again in about a couple of hours in order to propose that a joint communiqué should be sent to the Press to the effect that :

During the afternoon the German Ambassador and the Minister for Foreign Affairs had a fresh interview, in the course of which, in the most amicable spirit, and acting in an identical spirit of peaceful co-operation (*sentiment de solidarité pacifique*), they examined the means which might be employed to maintain general peace.¹

This gave M. Berthelot his opportunity.

The Acting Political Director replied by asking if he might speak to him in a manner quite personal and private, as man to man, quite freely and without regard to their respective functions. Baron von Schoen asked him to do so.

M. Berthelot then said that to any simple mind Germany's attitude was inexplicable if it did not aim at war ; a purely objective analysis of the facts and the psychology of the Austro-German relations led logically to this conclusion. In the face of the repeated statement that Germany was ignorant of the contents of the Austrian Note, it was no longer permissible to raise any doubt on that point ; but was it probable that Germany would have arrayed herself on the side of Austria in such an adventure with her eyes closed ? Did the psychology of all the past relations of Vienna and Berlin allow one to admit that Austria could have taken up a position without any possible retreat, before having weighed with her ally all the consequences of her uncompromising attitude ? How surprising appeared the refusal by Germany to exercise mediating influence at Vienna now that she knew the extraordinary text of the Austrian Note ! What responsibility was the German Government assuming and what suspicions would rest upon them if they persisted in inter-

¹ F. 57.

posing between Austria and the Powers, after what might be called the absolute submission of Serbia, and when the slightest advice given by them to Vienna would put an end to the nightmare which weighed on Europe!

The breaking off of diplomatic relations by Austria, her threats of war, and the mobilisation which she was undertaking make peculiarly urgent pacific action on the part of Germany, for from the day when Austrian troops crossed the Serbian frontier, one would be faced by an act which without doubt would oblige the St. Petersburg Cabinet to intervene, and would risk the unloosing of a war which Germany declares that she wishes to avoid.

Herr von Schoen, who listened smiling, once more affirmed that Germany had been ignorant of the text of the Austrian Note, and had only approved it after its delivery; she thought, however, that Serbia had need of a lesson severe enough for her not to be able to forget it, and that Austria owed it to herself to put an end to a situation which was dangerous and intolerable for a Great Power. He declared besides that he did not know the text of the Serbian reply, and showed his personal surprise that it had not satisfied Austria, if indeed it was such as the papers, which are often ill informed, represented it to be.

He insisted again on Germany's peaceful intentions and gave his impressions as to the effect that might arise from good advice given, for instance, at Vienna, by England in a friendly tone. According to him Austria was not uncompromising; what she rejects is the idea of a formal mediation, the "spectre" of a conference: a peaceful word coming from St. Petersburg, good words said in a conciliatory tone by the Powers of the Triple Entente, would have a chance of being well received. He added, finally, that he did not say that Germany on her side would not give some advice at Vienna.¹

The events of Saturday at St. Petersburg, the communication to the papers, and the beginning of military preparations at once led to more active protests by Germany. The German Government at once sent telegrams instructing the German Ambassadors at London and Paris to protest against this action of Russia, and to ask for the co-operation of Great Britain and France.

Austria-Hungary has declared in St. Petersburg officially and solemnly that it has no desire for territorial gain in Serbia; that it will not touch the existence of the Kingdom, but that it desires to establish peaceful conditions. According to news received here, the call for several classes of the reserves is

¹ F. 57.

expected immediately, which is equivalent to mobilisation. If this news proves correct, we shall be forced to countermeasures very much against our own wishes. Our desire to localise the conflict and to preserve the peace of Europe remains unchanged. We ask to act in this sense at St. Petersburg with all possible emphasis.¹

After officially declaring to Russia that Austria-Hungary has no intention to acquire territorial gain and to touch the existence of the Kingdom, the decision whether there is to be a European war rests solely with Russia, which has to bear the entire responsibility. We depend upon France, with which we are at one in the desire for the preservation of the peace of Europe, that it will exercise its influence at St. Petersburg in favour of peace.²

These efforts completely failed. Great Britain and France, who throughout acted in full agreement with one another, refused to accept the suggestion made to them. They considered that the Russian protest was quite justified, that it was the Austrian action which was the cause of the difficulty, that it did in fact constitute a real attack on Russian interests, that Russia was acting in self-defence; it was therefore impossible to bring pressure to bear on Russia alone; they could not do this unless at the same time Germany brought pressure to bear on Austria. With this condition they were ready to exert their full influence, and in fact had already done so.

Sir G. Buchanan had already expressed an earnest hope that Russia would not precipitate war by mobilising, until Sir Edward Grey had had time to use his influence in favour of peace.

I said all I could to impress prudence on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and warned him that if Russia mobilised, Germany would not be content with mere mobilisation, or give Russia time to carry out hers, but would probably declare war at once.³

And on Monday he said that they must not,

if our efforts (at mediation) were to be successful, do anything to precipitate a conflict. In these circumstances I trusted that the Russian Government would defer mobilisation ukase for as long as possible, and that troops would not be allowed to cross the frontier even when it was issued.

¹ G. 10. Cf. E. 46.

² G. 10A.

³ E. 17.

In reply the Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that until the issue of the Imperial ukase no effective steps towards mobilisation could be taken, and the Austro-Hungarian Government would profit by delay in order to complete her military preparations if it was deferred too long.¹

What Sir E. Grey did in fact was to accompany his proposal for a conference with a request that all military preparations should be suspended pending the result of the conference,² and and this was supported by France.³ The English and French view was that it would be impossible to ask Russia to suspend preparations while Austria was actively pressing forward for an immediate war with Serbia.

The message was delivered at Paris in a written Note by the Ambassador with the comment, "The German Government have firm confidence that the French Government, with which they know that they are at one in the warm desire that European peace should be able to be maintained, will use their whole influence with the cabinet of St. Petersburg in a pacific spirit."⁴

The French comment is that "a French *démarche* at St. Petersburg would be misunderstood, and must have as corollary a German *démarche* at Vienna, or, failing that, mediation by the four less interested Powers in both capitals." Acting on this principle, on the same day they informed Sir E. Grey that "the Government of the Republic is ready to instruct the French representatives at St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Belgrade to induce the Russian, Austrian, and Serbian Governments to abstain from all military operations pending the results of this conference."

Germany demanded under threats a free hand for Austria and that Russia should make no preparations; England and France asked for a waiting attitude on both sides pending discussion.

This is lucidly explained in a circular despatch from Paris.

The Austro-German attitude is becoming clearer. Austria, uneasy concerning the Slav propaganda, has seized the opportunity of the crime of Sarajevo in order to punish the Serbian intrigues, and to obtain in this quarter guarantees which, according as events are allowed to develop or not, will either affect only the Serbian Government

M. Bienvenu-
Martin,
July 29.

¹ E. 44.

³ E. 51 enclosure and E. 52.

² E. 36 and E. 49.

⁴ F. 62.

and army, or become territorial questions. Germany intervenes between her ally and the other Powers and declares that the question is a local one, namely, the punishment of a political crime committed in the past, and for the future sure guarantees that the anti-Austrian intrigues will be put an end to. The German Government thinks that Russia should be content with the official and formal assurances given by Austria, to the effect that she does not seek territorial aggrandisement and that she will respect the integrity of Serbia; in these circumstances the danger of war can only come from Russia, if she seeks to intervene in a question which is well defined. In these circumstances any action for the maintenance of peace must therefore take place at St. Petersburg alone.

This sophism, which would relieve Germany from intervening at Vienna, has been maintained unsuccessfully at Paris by Herr von Schoen, who has vainly endeavoured to draw us into identical Franco-German action at St. Petersburg; it has been also expounded in London to Sir E. Grey. In France, as in England, a reply was given that the St. Petersburg Cabinet have, from the beginning, given the greatest proofs of their moderation, especially by associating themselves with the Powers in advising Serbia to yield to the requirements of the Austrian Note. Russia does not therefore in any way threaten peace; it is at Vienna that action must be taken; it is from there that the danger will come, from the moment that they refuse to be content with the almost complete submission of Serbia to exorbitant demands; that they refuse to accept the co-operation of the Powers in the discussion of the points which remain to be arranged between Austria and Serbia; and, finally, that they do not hesitate to make a declaration of war as precipitate as the original Austro-Hungarian Note.

The attitude at Berlin, as at Vienna, is still dilatory. In the former capital, while protesting that the Germans desire to safeguard general peace by common action between the four Powers, the idea of a conference is rejected without any other expedient being suggested, and while they refuse to take any positive action at Vienna. In the Austrian capital they would like to keep St. Petersburg in play with the illusion of an entente which might result from direct conversations, while they are taking action against Serbia.

In these circumstances it seems essential that the St. Petersburg Cabinet, whose desire to unravel this crisis peacefully is manifest, should immediately give their adherence to the English proposal. This proposal must be strongly supported at Berlin in order to decide Herr von Jagow to take real action at Vienna capable of stopping Austria and preventing her from supplementing her diplomatic advantage by military successes. The Austro-Hungarian Government would, indeed, not be slow to take

advantage of it in order to impose on Serbia, under the elastic expression of "guarantees," conditions which, in spite of all assurances that no territorial aggrandisement was being sought, would in effect modify the status of Eastern Europe, and would run the risk of gravely compromising the general peace either at once or in the near future.¹

These events have been the subject of some controversy.

After the publication of the French Book an article in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, to which obviously considerable weight must be attached, challenges the view of the Ambassador's action taken by the French Government.

Characteristic of the one-sided standpoint of the Triple Entente is the manner in which the Yellow Book represents the action of the Ambassador, Freiherr von Schoen. He was instructed to propose in the friendliest way to the French Government common action in a peaceful sense, and at the same time express the wish that moderation should be also suggested in St. Petersburg from Paris. Every unprejudiced reader must acknowledge that in this step is an unanswerable proof of the conciliatory spirit of the German Government as well as their wish to see peace maintained. In the suggestion of Freiherr von Schoen, however, the French statesman saw merely the stupid attempt of Germany to sow distrust between Germany and France. But mark. The Powers of the Triple Entente require from Germany that it should not only give good advice to its ally, but also exercise *pressure* upon it. They make a serious charge against Germany that it will not assent to the suggestion. When, however, Germany asks France to exercise moderating influence on her ally this becomes a perfidious attempt to stir up discord.

This is a useful commentary, for it serves to bring out what is really the essential point. It is not the case that the French refused to exert pressure on Russia while asking Germany to exert pressure upon Austria. What they did do was to say that they could not exert pressure on Russia unless Germany also did the same on Austria.² "A French *démarche* at St. Petersburg would be misunderstood, and must have as a corollary a German *démarche* at Vienna, or failing that, mediation by the four more or less interested Powers in both capitals."

The complaint against Germany is that they asked France to bring pressure to bear upon Russia, but refused to act in a

¹ F. 85.

² See French Yellow Book No. 62.

similar way towards their own ally (we have seen in the previous negotiations how constantly and repeatedly this refusal was made), and also refused to join in the general mediatory proposals. What they asked the French to do was to exercise strong pressure upon St. Petersburg, while acquiescing in the situation that Germany should continue to support Austria in her provocative attitude.

The best comment on this passage is in fact that to be found in the words of a German writer :

Russia's conflict with Austria-Hungary subjected the Entente to the supreme test. There is no doubt that a single word on the part of France would have been sufficient to keep down the Russian war party. . . . It is of course equally certain that any withdrawal of France and England would have broken up the Triple Entente, even if treaties and agreements would, so to speak, have allowed these two Powers a free hand. A novel orientation of the entire European policy might have arisen which would not necessarily have resulted in the hegemony of one single State, but in which every Power might have had equal chances.¹

Half of this is true ; the Entente would have been broken up ; but if it had been broken up the Triple Alliance would have remained. Russia would have found herself confronted by the joint action of Austria, Germany, and France ; to this she would undoubtedly have had to submit ; Austria would have had a free hand in Serbia, but what would the result to France have been ? The next time she was in difficulties she would have appealed in vain to Russia for support and have been confronted without allies by the whole strength of Germany and Austria. She would indeed have existed at the sufferance of Germany, and we know now what that means. A novel orientation of the entire European policy would have resulted in the hegemony of one single State, and the " equal chances of every Power " would have been in truth submission to the preponderance of Germany.

II

The attempt to isolate Russia had therefore failed ; France refused to separate herself from her ally, Great Britain refused

¹ " The Genesis of the Great War," by Dr. Karl Helfferich, p. 51.

to give her countenance to proposals which seemed to her manifestly unjust. It only remained to try the last means, namely, intimidation.

As soon as the determination of Russia to make herself heard as against the Austrian attack upon Serbia was known, the German Government began to use language at St. Petersburg which in no equivocal way showed that if Russia continued her protest she would have to meet in war the combined Austrian and German armies.

The determination eventually to mobilise had been made at St. Petersburg on Saturday night. No secret was made of it: it was known to all the newspaper correspondents, and this at once brought the German Government, who were of course well informed, into the field.

So far they had played a secondary part. Now they took the initiative and did so without any consultation with Austria. Two telegrams were sent to Count Pourtales, the one in the nature of a serious warning:

After Austria's solemn declaration of its territorial disinterestedness, the responsibility for a possible disturbance of the peace of Europe through a Russian intervention rests solely upon Russia. We trust still that Russia will undertake no steps which will threaten seriously the peace of Europe.¹

The other highly menacing:

Preparatory military measures by Russia will force us to countermeasures which must consist in mobilising the army.

But mobilisation means war.

As we know the obligations of France towards Russia, this mobilisation would be directed against both Russia and France. We cannot assume that Russia desires to unchain such a European war. Since Austria-Hungary will not touch the existence of the Serbian kingdom, we are of the opinion that Russia can afford to assume an attitude of waiting. We can all the more support the desire of Russia to protect the integrity of Serbia as Austria-Hungary does not intend to question the latter. It will be easy in the further development of the affair to find a basis for an understanding.²

This was not merely sent for guidance to be used at dis-

¹ G. 10B.

² German White Book, p. 5.

cretion: the Ambassador was instructed to communicate it to the Russian Government; it was a formal and official Note.

What an extraordinary position is this. Austria is to make war on Serbia; they are to advance into the Balkans with an army of perhaps 300,000 men, occupy the kingdom and dictate terms of peace, but if Russia moves a single man so as to be prepared for any eventuality Germany will at once mobilise and go to war. The action of Russia is to be based on what Germany thinks she can afford to do; it will be time for her to make her voice heard "in the further development of the affair," *i.e.* after Serbia has been conquered. To any one who has any knowledge of the previous relations of Austria and Russia in the Balkans this must appear one of the most insolent documents ever despatched.¹

Count Pourtalès saw M. Sazonof on the Sunday. Our only

¹ This telegram is given on the authority of the German White Book. It is quoted there, and we must therefore assume that it was sent and used on this day. Owing, however, to the careless editing, the position of this in the negotiations and correspondence is not really quite clear. As will be seen, two telegrams were sent to Count Pourtalès on this day, the tone of which differs very considerably. We are not told which one of them was sent first, and we do not know which one Count Pourtalès used in his interview with M. Sazonof. The shorter one, which I have quoted first, is probably only a portion of a longer telegram; possibly, indeed, they are different portions of the same telegram. It is indeed one of the most unsatisfactory features of the correspondence, as published by Germany, that they obviously quote, not the whole of documents, but small passages from them. Moreover, it is to be noted that there are considerable differences between the English translation of the White Book issued officially by the German Government and the original German text. In the English edition the text is altered, and though the telegram remains in the same place the date is omitted. It is, I think, just possible that this implies that in the German a mistake had been made—the telegram was really not sent on this but on a later day; this mistake was found out before the English translation was issued, and the alteration was made in consequence. It is remarkable that no reference to this extremely threatening language is found in the Russian or Austrian account of the negotiations. Possibly Count Pourtalès used some discretion and did not, as he was instructed, communicate this message to the Russian Government as an official Note. However, until the German Government publish their correspondence in a more satisfactory manner, we must assume that this telegram was really sent on the date originally fixed to it.

knowledge of this interview comes from Austrian sources. We have in a telegram from Count Szápáry a very valuable note as to it.

As the result of reports about measures taken for mobilisation of Russian troops, Count Pourtalès has called the Russian Minister's attention in the most serious manner to the fact that nowadays measures of mobilisation would be a highly dangerous form of diplomatic pressure; for, in this case, the purely military discussion of the question by the general staffs would find expression, and if that button were once touched in Germany the situation would get out of control.¹

Count Szápáry,
July 26.

The warning was doubtless genuine and well-meant, but how illuminating it is. Here we have from the mouth of the German Ambassador himself a confession which completely confirms the worst accusations brought against the German Government; if once military questions came to the front the German General Staff would take control of the situation and would rush the country into war. If this indeed were so, it will explain the difficulties which, as the negotiations continued, were found in doing any business with Germany, but then surely that was all the more reason why the civil rulers of Germany should have prevented Austria starting on the dangerous game of military preparations and mobilisation.

The telegram continues :

M. Sazonof assured the German Ambassador on his word of honour that the reports on the subject were incorrect; that up to that time not a single horse and not a single reservist had been called up, and that all the measures that were being taken were merely measures of preparation in the military districts of Kieff, Odessa, and perhaps Kasan and Moscow.²

No doubt in consequence of this (to quote the words of Count Szápáry), "immediately afterwards the Imperial German Military Attaché received by courier late in the evening an invitation from Suchomlinow, the Minister for War, who explained that Count Pourtalès had spoken with the Foreign Minister about the Russian military preparations, and as the

¹ A. 28.

² Ibid.

Ambassador might have misunderstood certain military details, he was taking the opportunity of giving him more detailed information.”¹

The Military Attaché reported as follows :

M. Sazonof had asked him [the Minister for War] to make the military position clear to me. He gave me his word of honour that as yet no orders for mobilisation of any kind had been issued. For the present merely preparatory measures would be taken, not a horse would be levied, not a reservist called up. If Austria crossed the Serbian frontier, the military districts of Kieff, Odessa, Moscow, and Kasan, which face Austria, will be mobilised. In no circumstances will mobilisation take place on the German front, Warsaw, Vilna, and St. Petersburg. Peace with Germany is earnestly desired. My question, what was the object of the mobilisation against Austria, was met with a shrug of the shoulders and a reference to the diplomatists. I gave the Minister for War to understand that his friendly intentions would be appreciated by us, but that we should also consider mobilisation against Austria to be in itself extremely threatening. The Minister emphasised repeatedly and with great stress Russia's urgent need of and earnest wish for peace.²

Germany had delivered her first protest on her own initiative on Sunday. On Tuesday, however, we have a telegram from Vienna to Berlin suggesting that the German Government should take the initiative in making a formal protest against any mobilisation. Owing to our ignorance of the relations between Germany and Austria, we do not know whether this was spontaneous or whether (as is at least possible) it was sent in consequence of some suggestion from Berlin or from the German Ambassador.

I request Your Excellency to go at once to the Chancellor or the Secretary of State and communicate to him the following in my

name :

Count
Berchtold,
July 28.

According to reports, agreeing with each other, received from St. Petersburg, Kieff, Warsaw, Moscow, and Odessa, Russia is making extensive military preparations. M. Sazonof has indeed given an assurance on his word of

¹ A. 28.

² A. 28. G. 11. The last sentence is omitted in the version of this telegram published by the German Government.

honour, as has also the Russian Minister of War, that mobilisation has not hitherto been ordered; the latter has, however, communicated to the German Military Attaché that the military districts which border on Austria-Hungary—Kieff, Odessa, Moscow, and Kasan—will be mobilised, should our troops cross the Serbian frontier.

Under these circumstances, I would urgently ask the Cabinet at Berlin to take into immediate consideration whether the attention of Russia should not be drawn, in a friendly manner, to the fact that the mobilisation of the above districts amounts to a threat against Austria-Hungary, and that, therefore, should these measures be carried out, they would be answered by the most extensive military countermeasures, not only by the Monarchy but by our ally, the German Empire.

In order to make it more easy for Russia to withdraw, it appears to us appropriate that such a step should, in the first place, be taken by Germany alone; nevertheless we are ready to take this step in conjunction with Germany.

Unambiguous language appears to me at the present moment to be the most effective method of making Russia fully conscious of all that is involved in a threatening attitude.¹

At this time there seems to have been some uncertainty at Berlin whether they should at once go to war if Russia began to mobilise any part of her forces, or whether a partial mobilisation, on the Austrian frontier only, should be permitted. The telegrams sent on Sunday speak unconditionally, and give the impression that any mobilisation would be met with counter-mobilisation—which meant war. On the other hand, Herr von Jagow in his conversations with Sir Edward Goschen and M. Cambon took a different line. On Monday Sir E. Goschen telegraphs :

In the course of a short conversation the Secretary of State said that as yet Austria was only partially mobilising, but that if

Russia mobilised against Germany the latter would
Sir E. Goschen, July 27. have to follow suit. I asked him what he meant

by "mobilising against Germany." He said that if Russia only mobilised in south, Germany would not mobilise, but if she mobilised in north, Germany would have to do so too, and Russian system of mobilisation was so complicated that it might be difficult exactly to locate her mobilisation. Germany would therefore have to be very careful not to be taken by surprise.²

¹ A. 42.

² E. 43.

And M. Cambon on the same day :

To-day I have had a conversation with the Secretary of State on the proposal by England that Germany should join the Cabinets of London, Paris, and Rome to prevent *M. Jules Cambon*, hostilities between St. Petersburg and Vienna. July 27.

I remarked to him that Sir Edward Grey's proposal opened the way to a peaceful issue. Herr von Jagow replied that he was disposed to join in, but he remarked to me that, if Russia mobilised, Germany would be obliged to mobilise at once, that we should be forced to the same course also, and that then a conflict would be almost inevitable. I asked him if Germany would regard herself as bound to mobilise in the event of Russia mobilising only on the Austrian frontier; he told me "No," and authorised me formally to communicate this limitation to you.¹

The discrepancy is remarkable: one thing is said to France and England, another to Russia. If it was really considered that mobilisation against Austria only would not be looked on as a hostile act towards Germany, why was not this said at St. Petersburg? There the other line was consistently followed, and this had as a necessary result that the Russian Government had to take into consideration that if they mobilised in the south they might at once be met by an attack in the north. The only effect would be to cause them to hasten and extend their preparations. This threatening language did not deter Russia from mobilisation; it only confirmed the belief that it was necessary, and that partial mobilisation would be most dangerous.

Had Germany recognised that the partial mobilisation by Austria could fairly be met by a partial mobilisation by Russia, the result might have been very different.

III

Fortunately we have additional and very valuable evidence as to the real view taken by the German Government. On Tuesday, just when the Chancellor was professing his desire to bring about a peaceful solution, the Government addressed to the Governments of the other German States an explanation as to their

¹ F. 67.

position and plans which can only be read as a clear intimation to them that war was to be expected.

And first a word as to the position of those to whom this was addressed. The German Empire is a Federation of Sovereign States of which Prussia indeed is much the largest and the most important, but of which all the others have extensive rights and some of them, especially Saxony and Bavaria, considerable power. The highest authority for legislation is the Bundesrat or Federal Council, which consists of delegates appointed by the Governments of the various States; the members of the Bundesrat enjoy the position and privileges of diplomatic agents, and they give their votes in the Council under instructions from their Governments, and not according to their individual opinions. Although war can be declared by the Emperor as President of the Federation, it was of course necessary that he should beforehand be assured of the support of the Federated States, and as soon as war was imminent it would be necessary to inform the different Governments, in order that they might give the necessary instructions to their representatives in the Council. The meetings of the Council are secret. A formal explanation of the Government policy to the Federated Governments is the most authentic expression of this policy that can be looked for.

The document is in the form of instructions to the envoys of the Prussian Government accredited to the different Governments of Germany.¹ It begins by recounting the grievances of Austria against Serbia; this, though naturally a one-sided statement, is a not unfair exposition of the Austrian point of view. It then continues:

It would be compatible neither with its dignity nor with its right to self-preservation if the Austro-Hungarian Government persisted in viewing idly any longer the intrigues beyond the frontier, through which the safety and the integrity of the Monarchy are permanently threatened. With this state of affairs the action as well as the demands of the Austro-Hungarian Government can be viewed only as justifiable.

The reply of the Serbian Government to the demands which the Austro-Hungarian Government put on the 23rd inst. through its representative in Belgrade, shows that the dominating factors in

¹ It is printed in the German White Book, Exhibit 2.

Serbia are not inclined to cease their former policies and agitation. There will remain nothing else for the Austro-Hungarian Government than to press its demands, if need be through military action, unless it renounces for good its position as a Great Power.

It will be noticed that this entirely passes over all the different points which have been made during the negotiations of the last five days, as, for instance, that while the demands of Austria were to a large extent justifiable, grave exception could be taken to the action and form in which the demands were made; that the reply of Serbia showed that that country was prepared, if not entirely, at any rate to a large extent, to meet the demands of Austria; and thereby it leads to a quite perverted conclusion that Austria must press its demands, if need be through military action, unless it renounces for good its position as a Great Power. This would be all very well if there had been no alternative between acquiescence in Serbian attacks and war; this was not the case; it had by this time been made quite clear that there were other methods of bringing about the submission of Serbia.

The whole document is written in exactly the same tone as the instructions sent out on the 23rd of July; all that had happened during the intervening days is ignored. All that Great Britain, France, and Italy had done to offer mediation might, so far as this statement of the case goes, have been left undone; all the conversations between the Chancellor and the Secretary of State and the Ambassador to the Powers appear as so much wasted breath.

The references to Russia are still more misleading.

Some Russian personalities deem it their right as a matter of course and a task of Russia's, actively to become a party to Serbia in the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. For the European conflagration which would result from a similar step by Russia, the *Nowoje Wremja* believes itself justified in making Germany responsible in so far as it does not induce Austria-Hungary to yield.

Could anything be more disingenuous than this? It is made to appear that the Russian protest came entirely from the Press. There is not a word to inform the German Governments as to the negotiations which had been going on with the Russian

Government; not a word as to the weighty and responsible protest made by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, not a word of the proposals to discuss the situation with Austria, not a word as to the Russian offer to help the Austrians in getting the guarantees to which they were justified. The German Governments were given to understand that there was perhaps a good deal of excitement in Russia which had found expression in ill-regulated outbursts in the Press; and this was after three days of constant diplomatic discussion.

Again we find the point made that Austria-Hungary has declared that she has no intention of acquiring Serbian territory, but there is no warning that the Russians had declared themselves not satisfied with this unless some security for the sovereignty of Serbia was added.

The document concludes with the statement of the complete solidarity of Germany with Austria-Hungary, and with a clear warning that this support will probably lead to war:

Should, however, against our hope, through the interference of Russia the fire be spread, we should have to support, faithful to our duty as allies, the neighbour-monarchy with all the power at our command. We shall take the sword only if forced to it, but then in the clear consciousness that we are not guilty of the calamity which war will bring upon the peoples of Europe.

Could we have a clearer statement of the futility of all attempts to mediation; could it be shown more incontrovertibly that there was in fact no truth in the statements that Germany had tried or wished to exercise a mediatory influence upon Austria? Does it not on the contrary appear that Germany was throughout supporting and encouraging Austria in her uncompromising attitude?

If instead of this statement there had been sent to the German Governments a true account of the situation; had it been told to them that Austria indeed had a just cause of complaint against the Serbs; that she had in consequence made certain demands which seemed to the German Government on the whole, reasonable; that the answer of Serbia had gone some way in accepting them, but still was not sufficient to satisfy Austria. Had they been told that the Russian Government had given them to understand that if Austria went to war they would be compelled to support Serbia, but that they were quite willing

to give to Austria her full support in getting the necessary concessions from Serbia, and were desirous with this object in view, of beginning conversations based on the Austrian ultimatum and the Serbian answer. Had they been told that Great Britain, France, and Italy had offered their services as mediators and had earnestly pressed that the issue either between Austria and Serbia or between Austria and Russia should be submitted to the mediation of disinterested Powers, but that on the whole, Austria and Germany had decided that no negotiations should be allowed on the basis of the Austrian ultimatum ; that the quarrel with Russia could not be submitted to mediation of the Powers, and that their good offices had been rejected ; that Austria proposed to press on with her demands and to accept nothing short of the whole of them, to begin war with Serbia knowing that that would inevitably bring about war with Russia ; that Germany proposed to follow her in this, and not allow any third Power or group of Powers to step in between Austria and Serbia, or any discussion as to the details of the guarantees to be offered, and that on this ground, and this ground alone, she was taking a course which it was known would involve war both with Russia and with France—had this been disclosed to the German Governments and the German nation, would the Imperial Government have been so sure that they would receive the support of the people?

This was sent on Tuesday—sent before Russia's mobilisation had passed beyond the preparatory stage. By it the Executive Government and the Foreign Office formally intimated to the representatives of the nation that a claim to be consulted by Russia will be answered, if necessary, by war. This being so it was a mere matter of political and military strategy at what period Germany broke off the negotiations, and whether they made partial or total mobilisation the pretext. The eventual result was predetermined, and all suggestions for mediation were hopeless from the beginning.

CHAPTER VII

DECLARATION OF WAR ON SERBIA

WE have in a former chapter carried the history of the proposals for mediation down to Wednesday. It must always, however, be remembered that they were in reality merely an interlude. Their real object always was to find some means by which the development of armaments and military operations should be stopped. They would only have been important if they had caused the cessation of the Austrian attack on Serbia which was threatened. The prevention of hostilities was the essential matter. But this had not been secured. All the time the Austrian programme was being carried out without fail; Russia, and the whole of the rest of Europe, could not secure any delay, any pause, any cessation. There is always some danger that the length and complexity of the negotiations may distract our attention from what was the really fundamental matter—the action of the Austrian army. The Russian plan had been clearly formed and publicly announced, and would certainly be carried out; as long as Austria remained quiet they would do anything, but so soon as Austria attacked Serbia they would mobilise. “Unless Germany could restrain Austria I could regard the situation as desperate,” said M. Sazonof.

Unfortunately, Germany consistently refused to do anything to restrain Austria.

I

Even though diplomatic relations were broken off there had been a possibility that at least the actual beginning of hostilities might be postponed, and in this way time might be gained; and at this moment time was everything. There could be little doubt that even if a few days' respite could be gained some

way out might be found ; if matters were to be precipitated the worst must be expected.

On Friday Sir Edward Grey had pointed out to Prince Lichnowsky :

The immediate danger was that in a few hours Austria might march into Serbia and Russian Slav opinion demand that Russia should march to help Serbia ; it would be very desirable to get Austria not to precipitate military action and so to gain more time. But none of us could influence Austria in this direction unless Germany would propose and participate in such action at Vienna. You should inform Secretary of State.¹

Sir E. Grey,
July 24.

The same day Count Berchtold had held out hopes that this suggestion might be met : he telegraphed to Count Mensdorff :

I beg you to explain at once to Sir Edward Grey that our *démarche* of yesterday at Belgrade is not to be considered as a formal ultimatum, but that there is merely a *démarche* with a time-limit, which, as Your Excellency will be good enough to explain to Sir Edward Grey in strict confidence—if the time-limit expires without result—will for the time be followed only by the breaking off of diplomatic relations, and by the beginning of the necessary military preparations, as we are absolutely resolved to carry through our just demands.

Count Berchtold,
July 24.

Your Excellency is empowered to add that if Serbia, after the expiration of the time-limit, was only to give way under the pressure of our military preparations, we should indeed have to demand that she should make good the expenses which we had incurred ; as is well known, we have already had twice, 1908 and 1912, to mobilise because of Serbia.²

One does not see why this information should have been made confidential. Anyhow Count Mensdorff appears to have neglected this condition ; Sir Edward Grey at once telegraphed the information to the British representatives at Paris, St. Petersburg, and Berlin :

The Austrian Ambassador has been authorised to inform me that the Austrian method of procedure on expiry of the time-limit would be to break off diplomatic relations and commence military preparations, but not military operations. In informing the German Ambassador of

Sir E. Grey,
July 25.

¹ E. 11.

² A. 17.

this, I said that it interposed a stage of mobilisation before the frontier was actually crossed, which I had urged yesterday should be delayed.¹

And to Sir M. de Bunsen :

It has been a relief to hear that the steps which the Austrian Government were taking were to be limited for the moment to the rupture of relations and to military preparations, and not operations. I trust, therefore, that if the Austro-Hungarian Government consider it too late to prolong the time-limit, they will at any rate give time in the sense and for the reasons desired by Russia before taking any irretrievable steps.²

Sir E. Grey,
July 25.

M. Sazonof, when this communication was made to him, observed that it did not quite correspond with the information which had reached him from German quarters. The Russian Chargé d'Affaires had in fact pressed for this very point at Berlin, but without success.

M. Bronewsky insisted that if the time-limit could not be extended, action at least might be delayed so as to allow the Powers to exert themselves to avoid a conflict. He added that the Austrian Note was couched in terms calculated to wound Serbia and to force her into war.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 25.

Herr von Jagow replied that there was no question of a war, but of an *exécution* in a local matter.

The Chargé d'Affaires in reply expressed regret that the German Government did not weigh their responsibilities in the event of hostilities breaking out, which might extend to the rest of Europe ; to this Herr von Jagow replied that he refused to believe in such consequences.

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires, like myself, has heard the rumour that Austria, while declaring that she did not desire an annexation of territory, would occupy parts of Serbia until she had received complete satisfaction. "One knows," he said to me, "what this word 'satisfaction' means." M. Bronewsky's impressions of Germany's ultimate intentions are very pessimistic.³

This answer was one which could not be maintained ; to say that military operations against Serbia did not constitute a war was as much as to say that Serbia was not an independent

¹ E. 25.

² E. 26. See also E. 14 and 25.

³ F. 43.

State ; it was to represent that Serbia was in a position with regard to Austria similar to that of an Indian State towards Great Britain, Thibet towards China, or Bavaria towards the German Empire. It is in cases such as these that the word "execution" is used. It was, however, the whole point of the Russian protest that Serbia should not be allowed to drop into this kind of relation towards Austria.

II

In accordance with this, the rupture of diplomatic relations was not immediately followed by the declaration of war, and it was this interval which gave opportunity for the various proposals for conversations on Sunday and Monday.

The war feeling in Austria and in Hungary was, however, so strong that the respite could not be a long one. All accounts from Vienna confirm this.

The news of the rupture of diplomatic negotiations on Saturday evening was received with great delight :

There were scenes of tremendous patriotic enthusiasm. A crowd many thousands strong marched off to the Ministry of War where it entirely filled the broad Ringstrasse. From thousands of throats rose the strains of "Gott erhalte Prinz Eugen" and "Die Wacht am Rhein," as in orderly procession the masses of people marched through the streets waving black and yellow flags. . . . Later in the evening a hostile turn was given to the demonstrations by a large crowd which tried to reach the Russian Embassy. It was, however, foiled in its intentions by the presence of large bodies of police which blocked all the approaches. The crowd therefore contented itself with a patriotic manifestation in front of the German Embassy, which is situated in a neighbouring street. Attempts to reach the Serbian Legation were likewise prevented by the police. Similar scenes are reported from Budapest.

The situation was greeted with similar enthusiasm in the Press. The *Neues Wiener Tageblatt* writes :

The desire to have finished with it is so powerful among our people that the news of the presentation of our demands is looked upon as a release. Everybody felt thus : "If Serbia gives in, then we are safe, at any rate for a time. If she does not give in, we will create tranquillity for a long time to come."

In all these popular demonstrations stress was laid on the solidarity between Germany and Austria, and in all cases they took the form of a national demonstration of the Germans against the Slav races.

During the evening of Saturday, the 25th, and the morning of the following Sunday, the Government issued a large number of ordinances showing that it was the intention at once to proceed with military operations against Serbia. For instance, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia were put under military jurisdiction ; provision was made for the suspension of constitutional provisions of a nature which is only usual in a state of war, and finally a partial mobilisation of the army was ordered. On the 26th is dated the order calling up the reserves for a partial mobilisation, and Austro-Hungarian subjects liable to serve in the army who were living in foreign countries were ordered at once to return to their own country for military service.¹

On the next day a semi-official communiqué was made to the Press explaining and justifying the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government in refusing to accept the Serbian answer,² and on the same day the first act of war was committed. A Serbian steamer was seized by the Austrians and the passengers detained ; the Austrians at once hauled down the Serbian colours and hoisted their own. Demonstrations in Vienna continued, and the Austrian Press now began to take the line that even "unreserved acceptance of the Austro-Hungarian demands would now no longer be able to check the course of our action. Diplomatic steps would now be probably quite useless."

The impression conveyed by the diplomatists in Vienna and by the Austrian Ambassadors in other capitals was not of a kind to remove that caused by these acts of the Government. We find in them a complete unanimity which is maintained throughout the whole of the negotiations, that Austria intended to press her claims to the utmost, and also that she either did not believe, or pretended not to believe, that Russia would make any serious opposition.

¹ The advertisements in the English papers appeared on Monday morning.

² See F. 75 (2).

I have had conversations with all my colleagues representing the Great Powers. The impression left on my mind is that the

Austro-Hungarian Note was so drawn up as to make war inevitable; that the Austro-Hungarian Govern-

Sir M. de Bunsen,
July 27.

ment are fully resolved to have war with Serbia; that they consider their position as a Great Power to be at stake; and that until punishment has been administered to Serbia it is unlikely that they will listen to proposals of mediation. This country has gone wild with joy at the prospect of war with Serbia, and its postponement or prevention would undoubtedly be a great disappointment.

I propose, subject to any special directions you desire to send me, to express to the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs the hope of His Majesty's Government that it may yet be possible to avoid war, and to ask His Excellency whether he cannot suggest a way out even now.¹

There seems no doubt that the attitude of the German Ambassador at Vienna contributed to this state of feeling throughout all the correspondence. He is represented as being more Austrian than the Austrians.

According to confident belief of German Ambassador, Russia will keep quiet during chastisement of Serbia, which Austria-

Hungary is resolved to inflict, having received assurances that no Serbian territory will be annexed

Sir M. de Bunsen,
July 26.

by Austria-Hungary. In reply to my question whether Russian Government might not be compelled by public opinion to intervene on behalf of kindred nationality, he said that everything depended on the personality of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who could resist easily, if he chose, the pressure of a few newspapers. He pointed out that the days of Pan-Slav agitation in Russia were over and that Moscow was perfectly quiet. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs would not, His Excellency thought, be so imprudent as to take a step which would probably result in many frontier questions in which Russia is interested, such as Swedish, Polish, Ruthene, Roumanian and Persian questions being brought into the melting-pot. France, too, was not at all in a condition for facing a war.

I replied that matters had, I thought, been made a little difficult for other Powers by the tone of Austro-Hungarian Government's ultimatum to Serbia. One naturally sympathised with many of the requirements of the ultimatum, if only the manner of expressing them had been more temperate. It was, however, impossible, according to the German Ambassador, to

¹ E. 41.

speaking effectively in any other way to Serbia. Serbia was about to receive a lesson which she required; the quarrel, however, ought not to be extended in any way to foreign countries. He doubted Russia, who had no right to assume a protectorate over Serbia, acting as if she made any such claim. As for Germany, she knew very well what she was about in backing up Austria-Hungary in this matter.¹

A similar impression is given by such information as is available from other capitals. At Rome they had special opportunities for understanding the Austrian point of view, but the opinion there was quite definite that no concession of any kind was to be expected; the only chance of preserving peace would be a complete acceptance of the Austrian Note, but there was doubt whether even that would now be satisfactory.

I saw the Secretary-General this morning, and found that he knew of the suggestion that France, Italy, Germany, and ourselves should work at Vienna and St. Petersburg in favour of moderation, if the relations between Austria and Serbia become menacing.

Sir R. Rodd,
July 25.

In his opinion Austria will only be restrained by the unconditional acceptance by the Serbian Government of her Note. There is reliable information that Austria intends to seize the Salonica Railway.²

The Marquis di San Giuliano told me that unfortunately throughout this affair Austria and Germany had been, and were still, convinced that Russia would not move. In this connection he read to me a despatch from M. Bollati reporting an interview which he had had yesterday with Herr von Jagow, in which the latter had again repeated to him that he did not think that Russia would move. He based this belief on the fact that the Russian Government had just sent an agent to Berlin to treat about some financial questions. The Austrian Ambassador at Berlin also told his English colleague that he did not believe in a general war, since Russia was not in the mood or in the condition to make war.

M. Barrère,
July 29.

The Marquis di San Giuliano does not share this opinion. He thinks that if Austria contents herself with humiliating Serbia and with exacting, besides the acceptance of the Note, some material advantages which do not involve her territory, Russia can still find some means of coming to an agreement with her: But if Austria wishes either to dismember Serbia or to destroy her as an independent State, he thinks that it would be impossible for Russia not to intervene by military measures.³

¹ E. 32.

² E. 19.

³ F. 96.

And reports from Constantinople are to the same effect :

The Austro-Serbian conflict holds the attention of the Ottoman Government, and the Turks are delighted at the misfortunes of Serbia, but people here generally are led to believe that the conflict will remain localised. It is generally thought that once again Russia will not intervene in favour of Serbia in circumstances which would extend the armed conflict.

M. Bompard,
July 27.

The unanimous feeling in Ottoman political circles is that Austria, with the support of Germany, will attain her objects, and that she will make Serbia follow Bulgaria and enter into the orbit of the Triple Alliance.¹

I understand that the designs of Austria may extend considerably beyond the sanjak and a punitive occupation of Serbian territory. I gathered this from a remark let fall by the Austrian Ambassador here, who spoke of the deplorable economic situation of Salonica under Greek administration and of the assistance on which the Austrian army could count from Mussulman population discontented with Serbian rule.²

M. Beaumont,
July 29.

This belief that Russia was not in earnest and would eventually give way is of course of great importance in explaining and justifying the decision of Russia to mobilise. This was the only method open to them of convincing the German Powers that they were in earnest. The Russian Ambassador at Vienna did all that he could to remove this belief.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is away. During a long conversation which I had with Macchio to-day I drew his attention, in a perfectly friendly way, to the unfavourable impression produced in Russia by the presentation of demands by Austria to Serbia, which it was quite impossible for any independent State, however small, to accept. I added that this method of procedure might lead to the most undesirable complications, and that it had aroused profound surprise and general condemnation in Russia. We can only suppose that Austria, influenced by the assurances given by the German Representative at Vienna, who has egged her on throughout this crisis, has counted on the probable localisation of the dispute with Serbia, and on the possibility of inflicting with impunity a serious blow upon that country. The declaration by the Russian Government that Russia could not possibly remain indifferent in the face of such conduct has caused a great sensation here.³

M. Schebeko,
July 27.

¹ F. 65.

² E. 82.

³ R. 41.

The most sinister aspect of the situation was, throughout, the complete indifference shown to the very large concessions which had been made by Serbia. It might have appeared that even if the Serbian reply could not be accepted in its entirety, it would at least afford the basis for negotiation; they had gone so far to meet the Austrian demands, and the differences which remained between the Kingdom and the Monarchy were so small, that it would obviously have been perfectly easy for a final agreement to have been come to, and if there had been difficulty in direct negotiations between Serbia and Austria, any one or more of the other Powers acting as mediator could obviously have soon found a solution which would be fairly satisfactory to either side. The Austrians, however, absolutely refused any consideration of the kind. The language of the German Ambassador on this point is very characteristic.

The German Ambassador had heard of a letter addressed by you yesterday to the German Ambassador in London in which you expressed the hope that the Serbian concessions would be regarded as satisfactory. He asked whether I had been informed that a pretence of giving way at the last moment had been made by the Serbian Government. I had, I said, heard that on practically every point Serbia had been willing to give in. His Excellency replied that Serbian concessions were all a sham. Serbia proved that she well knew that they were insufficient to satisfy the legitimate demands of Austria-Hungary by the fact that before making her offer she had ordered mobilisation and retirement of Government from Belgrade.¹

Count Szécsen at Paris took a similar line.

The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador came to see me to hand me a memorandum which amounted to an indictment of Serbia; he was instructed by his Government to state that since Serbia had not given a satisfactory reply to the requirements of the Imperial Government, the latter found themselves obliged to take strong measures to induce Serbia to give the satisfaction and guarantees that are required of her. To-morrow the Austrian Government will take steps to that effect.

I asked the Ambassador to acquaint me with the measures

¹ E. 32.

contemplated by Austria, and Count Szécsen replied that they might be either an ultimatum, or a declaration of war, or the crossing of the frontier, but he had no precise information on this point.

I then called the Ambassador's attention to the fact that Serbia had accepted Austria's requirements on practically every point, and that the differences that remained on certain points might vanish with a little mutual goodwill, and with the help of the Powers who wished for peace; by fixing to-morrow as the date for putting her resolution into effect, Austria for the second time was making their co-operation practically impossible, and was assuming a grave responsibility in running the risk of precipitating a war the limits of which it was impossible to foresee.¹

On the instructions of his Government, the Austrian Ambassador has informed the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs that Serbia's answer has not been considered satisfactory in Vienna, and that to-morrow, Tuesday, Austria will proceed to take "energetic action" with the object of forcing Serbia to give the necessary guarantees. The Minister having asked what form such action would take, the Ambassador replied that he had no exact information on the subject, but it might mean either the crossing of the Serbian frontier, or an ultimatum, or even a declaration of war.²

This matter was discussed between Count Mensdorff and Sir Edward Grey on Monday, but the Austrian Ambassador did not give any hope that the attitude of his Government would be altered.

I said that I could not understand the construction put by the Austrian Government upon the Serbian reply, and I told Count Mensdorff the substance of the conversation that I had had with the German Ambassador this morning about that reply.

Count Mensdorff admitted that, on paper, the Serbian reply might seem to be satisfactory; but the Serbians had refused the one thing—the co-operation of Austrian officials and police—which would be a real guarantee that in practice the Serbians would not carry on their subversive campaign against Austria.³

On Tuesday war was at last declared. The declaration was sent in the most contemptuous and discourteous form, by means of an open telegram to the Serbian Government.⁴

¹ F. 75.

² R. 37.

³ E. 48. On this point see above, Chapter IV.

⁴ A. 37; S. 46.

The same day the Emperor Francis Joseph issued a rescript and manifesto in which, after recounting the offences of Serbia, he says :

A halt must be called to these intolerable proceedings, and an end must be put to the incessant provocations of Serbia. The honour and dignity of my Monarchy must be preserved unimpaired, and its political, economic, and military development must be guarded from these continual shocks. In vain did my Government make a last attempt to accomplish this object by peaceful means and to induce Serbia, by means of a serious warning, to desist. Serbia has rejected the just and moderate demands of my Government, and refused to conform to those obligations the fulfilment of which forms the natural and necessary foundation of peace in the life of peoples and States. I must therefore proceed by force of arms to secure those indispensable pledges which alone can ensure tranquillity to my States within and lasting peace without.

In this solemn hour I am fully conscious of the whole significance of my resolve and my responsibility before the Almighty. I have examined and weighed everything, and, with a serene conscience, I set out on the path to which my duty points. I trust in my peoples, who, throughout every storm, have always rallied in unity and loyalty round my Throne, and have always been prepared for the severest sacrifices for the honour, the greatness, and the might of the Fatherland. I trust in Austria-Hungary's brave and devoted forces, and I trust in the Almighty to give the victory to my arms.

Hostilities at once began. During the night between the 28th and 29th (Tuesday and Wednesday) the Serbians blew up a bridge over the Save between Semlin and Belgrade, and Austrian infantry and artillery with the Danube monitors then fired on the Serbians across the bridge. After a short engagement the Serbians retired. On the same day Austrian pioneers and watchmen captured two Serbian steamers loaded with ammunition and mines. An important article communicated to the *Pester Lloyd* appeared also on Tuesday, the 28th, in which it said :

The remotest consequences of the action against Serbia have been fully thought out and tested, and accordingly the population can set its mind at rest that the Dual Monarchy, having decided on this step, is in a position to meet each of these consequences with arms in its hands. The Dual Monarchy undertook the step at Belgrade with full knowledge of its possible results. In so doing it was guided by the certain feeling that the best

chances for the success of such action were now, if ever, on its side. . . .

We know we possess the strength to make our vital interests respected in all circumstances. This is doubtless no secret to other States, which are certainly very exactly informed of the forces at the disposal of the Dual Monarchy. If, nevertheless, we support the localisation of the conflict with Serbia, we only give a new proof that our care for the maintenance of the peace of the world is not less than that of any other Power in Europe.

The fatal step had been taken—matters had passed out of the exchange of Notes and conversations; from this moment it was the progress of the armies which governed the situation. The cannon shots at Belgrade found an echo in every capital in Europe. The transition from peace to war is never easy; when it has once been made it spreads like a pestilence.

In St. Petersburg the impression made was profound. The danger that they had anticipated was upon them. An Austrian army in action in the Balkans—what possibilities did this involve? Against this no verbal promises or paper assurances were any security; Russia must be ready to defend her friends and her own interests, and the mobilisation that had been in preparation must now be made effective.

To London a message was sent.

In face of the hostilities between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, it is necessary that Great Britain should take instant mediatory action, and that the military measures undertaken by Austria against Serbia should be immediately suspended. Otherwise mediation will only serve as an excuse to make the question drag on, and will meanwhile make it possible for Austria to crush Serbia completely and to acquire a dominant position in the Balkans.¹

M. Sazonof,
July 28.

At the same time a message was sent to the Russian Ambassador at Berlin instructing him to warn the German Government that:

In consequence of the declaration of war by Austria against Serbia, the Imperial Government will announce tomorrow (29th) the mobilisation in the military conscriptions of Odessa, Kieff, Moscow, and Kasan. Please inform German Government, confirming the absence in Russia of any aggressive intention against Germany.

M. Bienvenu-
Martin to M. de
Fleuriau,
July 28.

The Russian Ambassador at Vienna has not been recalled from his post.²

¹ R. 48; E. 70.

² E. 70.

What Sir Edward Grey had foreseen therefore now happened ; on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday Russia was preparing and waiting ; now, unable to get her protest attended to in any other way, she was driven to mobilise and it was no longer a question of an Austro-Serbian conflict but of an Austro-Russian dispute.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INTERVENTION OF THE EMPEROR

MEANWHILE the German Emperor, who at the beginning of the crisis had been away on his annual tour to Norway, had hurried back, and he reached Berlin on Sunday evening. This is announced in a curious telegram from Sir Horace Rumbold :

Emperor returns suddenly to-night, and Under Secretary of State says that Foreign Office regret this step, which was taken on His Majesty's own initiative. They fear that His Majesty's sudden return may cause speculation and excitement.¹

What is the explanation of this ? Perhaps it is to be found in the attitude which, as we have seen, was officially assumed by the Berlin Foreign Office. The whole matter was essentially local, it concerned Austria and Serbia alone ; it was not in any way a European question. The sudden return of the Emperor might appear to be inconsistent with this view.

Never did greater responsibility rest on any man. It was not yet too late ; there was still time to accept one of the many suggestions for mediation or for himself to make some proposal by which the whole affair could be settled by peaceable agreement. There was still time for a word of warning to Austria to stay her hand and allow a few more days for discussion. Peace could be had, but he was now the only man in Europe who could speak the decisive word.

There was much in his previous record and in the reputation which he had won, to cause hope that he would not fail on this occasion again to use his influence for peace. But there was one passage that might, if remembered, cause apprehension. Once before Austria had taken a forward move in the Balkans and

¹ E. 33.

met with opposition from Russia. Then also as now both Empires had mobilised their forces. On that occasion peace had been preserved because Russia had withdrawn her opposition before the united front of the two Germanic Empires. It was after this that the Emperor, while on a visit to an Austrian city, had proclaimed "that he had come to the help of Austria in shining armour." It was a lamentable utterance. The events of 1908 had inevitably left in Russia a bitter feeling and a determination that she should not again undergo a similar humiliation. This feeling might have worn away, the sharp conflict might have given rise to a closer friendship between the two Empires had the German victory been used with discretion. We have the example of France and England after Fashoda to illustrate this. At such a moment to proclaim ostentatious delight in such a victory was to ensure that in similar circumstances Germany must meet with an unconquerable resolution on the part of Russia to defend her claims to the uttermost.

If then he attempted to repeat what had been done in 1908, and to gain his object by the intimidation of Russia matters must soon get beyond his control. The warning had been given in unmistakable terms; there was no possibility of any doubt as to Russian action. Would he have the insight to recognise this and the courage to act on it?

I

The correspondent of *The Times*, who seems to have been well informed, tells us that the Emperor immediately on his return took a very active part in the conduct of the negotiations, but it was not until Tuesday evening that he personally intervened. This he did by a telegram to the Czar.

I have heard with the greatest anxiety of the impression which is caused by the action of Austria-Hungary against Serbia. The unscrupulous agitation which has been going on for years in Serbia has led to the revolting crime of which Archduke Franz Ferdinand has become a victim. The spirit which made the Serbians murder their own King and his consort still dominates that country. Doubtless you will agree with me that both of us, you as well as I, and all other sovereigns, have a common interest

to insist that all those who are responsible for this horrible murder shall suffer their deserved punishment.

On the other hand, I by no means overlook the difficulty encountered by you and your Government to stem the tide of public opinion. In view of the cordial friendship which has joined us both for a long time with firm ties, I shall use my entire influence to induce Austria-Hungary to obtain a frank and satisfactory understanding with Russia. I hope confidently that you will support me in my efforts to overcome all difficulties which may yet arise.¹

It contains, then, two points : (1) the appeal to the Czar that he, as all other sovereigns, should insist that all responsible for the murder should suffer their deserved punishment ; (2) an offer, in view of the difficulties encountered by the Russian Government in stemming the tide of public opinion, to use his entire influence to induce Austria to obtain a frank and satisfactory understanding with Russia. Both were in fact of little use. As to the first point, there was no difference of opinion ; no one was trying to protect the murderers ; in fact, Russia and all other countries were only asking to be allowed to help Austria to get the just and necessary retribution and guarantees. The second point might help the separate conversations with Austria which Russia had already offered, but it should be noted that when this telegram was sent, the Austrian Government had already refused to continue the discussion.

None the less the receipt of the telegram seems to have made a good impression. It must indeed have been assumed that if the Emperor threw in the great influence of his own character and personality, he must intend to find a peaceful solution. The Aide-de-Camp to the Czar said to the Military Attaché, "Thank God that a telegram from your Emperor has come." He said the next day that it made a deep impression on the Czar.

Whatever may be the reason, the feeling at St. Petersburg on Wednesday morning seems to have been somewhat easier. The order for mobilisation had not actually been issued, and, as we are told by the Belgian Minister, during the morning there was a meeting of Ministers at which "differences of opinion still made themselves heard, and the publication of

¹ G. 20.

mobilisation was postponed." Both the Czar and M. Sazonof seem still to have been looking for any means of getting Austria to pause. A strong appeal had already been sent to England to press on with the mediation proposals, now the Czar turned in a personal appeal to the German Emperor, which was despatched at 1.30, apparently before the Emperor's own telegram had been received.

It is a singularly honest statement of the situation in which he was placed; it contains a pressing personal appeal to the Emperor to save him from a step which he, above all men, would wish to avoid, but which would be inevitable unless Austria would stop.

I am glad that you are back in Germany. In this serious moment I ask you earnestly to help me. An ignominious war has been declared against a weak country and in Russia the indignation which I fully share is tremendous. I fear that very soon I shall be unable to resist the pressure exercised upon me, and that I shall be forced to take measures which will lead to war. To prevent a calamity such as a European war would be, I urge you, in the name of our old friendship, to do all in your power to restrain your ally from going too far.¹

It was probably also in the course of the morning that M. Sazonof had a long conversation with Count Pourtalès, the substance of which he communicates to the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin.

The German Ambassador informs me in the name of the Chancellor that Germany has not ceased to exercise a moderating influence at Vienna, and that she will continue to do so even after the declaration of war. Up to this morning there had been no news that the Austrian army had crossed the Serbian frontier. I begged the Ambassador to express my thanks to the Chancellor for the friendly tenor of this communication. I informed him of the military measures taken by Russia, none of which, I told him, were directed against Germany; I added that neither

M. Sazonof,
July 29.

¹ Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg stated in his speech to the Reichstag, on August 4th, that this telegram was not a reply to that of the Emperor, but was despatched before the Emperor's telegram had arrived. This, in view of the hours at which the two telegrams were sent, may appear improbable, but it explains the second telegram which was sent by the Czar on the same day.

should they be taken as aggressive measures against Austria-Hungary, their explanation being the mobilisation of the greater part of the Austro-Hungarian army.

The Ambassador said that he was in favour of direct explanations between the Austrian Government and Russia, and I replied that I, too, was quite willing, provided that the advice of the German Government, to which he had referred, found an echo at Vienna.

I pointed out at the same time that we were quite ready to accept the proposal for a conference of the four Powers, a proposal with which, apparently, Germany was not in entire sympathy.

I told him that, in my opinion, the best manner of turning to account all methods suitable for finding a peaceful solution would be to arrange for parallel discussions to be carried on as to a conference of the four Powers—Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy—and by a direct exchange of views between Austria-Hungary and Russia on much the same lines as occurred during the most critical moments of last year's crisis.

I told the Ambassador that, after the concessions which had been made by Serbia, it should not be very difficult to find a compromise to settle the other questions which remained outstanding, provided that Austria showed some goodwill and that all the Powers used their entire influence in the direction of conciliation.¹

A telegram from Berlin refers to Count Pourtalès' account of this interview.

The Secretary of State tells me that he received a telegram to-day from Pourtalès, stating that you seemed more inclined than you previously were to find a compromise acceptable to all parties. I replied that presumably you had been in favour of a compromise from the outset, provided always that it were acceptable, not only to Austria, but equally to Russia. He then said that it appeared that Russia had begun to mobilise on the Austrian frontier, and that he feared that this would make it more difficult for Austria to come to an understanding with us, all the more so as Austria was mobilising against Serbia alone, and was making no preparations upon our frontier. I replied that, according to the information in my possession, Austria was mobilising upon the Russian frontier also, and that consequently we had to take similar steps. I added that whatever measures we might, perhaps, have taken on our side were in no wise directed against Germany.²

¹ R. 49.

² R. 51.

Count Pourtalès gives an account of this conversation.

The Minister tried to persuade me that I should urge my Government to participate in a quadruple conference to find means to induce Austria-Hungary in a friendly way to give up those demands which touch upon the sovereignty of Serbia. I could merely promise to report the conversation and took the position that, after Russia had decided upon the baneful step of mobilisation, every exchange of ideas appeared now extremely difficult, if not impossible. Besides, Russia now was demanding from us in regard to Austria-Hungary the same which Austria-Hungary was being blamed for with regard to Serbia, *i.e.* an infraction of sovereignty; Austria-Hungary had promised to consider the Russian interests by disclaiming any territorial aspiration—a great concession on the part of a State engaged in war. The double Monarchy should therefore be permitted to attend to its affair with Serbia alone. There would always be time at the peace conference to return to the matter of forbearance towards the sovereignty of Serbia.

I added very solemnly that at this moment the entire Austro-Serbian affair was eclipsed by the danger of a general European conflagration, and I used all my efforts to present to the Secretary the magnitude of this danger.

It was impossible to dissuade Sazonof from the idea that Serbia could not now be deserted by Russia.¹

The whole tone disclosed by him is most uncompromising, and his despatch is not calculated to give one a high opinion of his discretion or of his discrimination, if indeed he really spoke of the promise of Austria to disclaim any territorial aspirations as a great concession, and asked Russia to be content to waive all discussions as to the sovereignty of Serbia till the peace conference after the war. To talk of the demands made by Russia as an infraction of sovereignty similar to those made by Austria on Serbia is pure nonsense.²

¹ German White Book, p. 9. I am assuming that this telegram refers to this meeting, but as published it is obviously only a portion of the original.

² In his despatch of December 24th Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg refers to this conversation :

Count Pourtalès did not leave the Minister in doubt that, according to his view, the entente Powers thereby were requiring from Austria-Hungary just what they had not been willing to suggest to Serbia, namely, that she should give way under military pressure.

The point of view represented by the German Ambassador entirely agrees with the account given by Sir George Buchanan of a conversation with him just before.

I fear that the German Ambassador will not help to smooth matters over, if he uses to his own Government the same language as he did to me to-day. He accused the Russian Government of endangering the peace of Europe by their mobilisation, and said, when I referred to all that had been recently done by Austria, that he could not discuss such matters. I called his attention to the fact that Austrian consuls had warned all Austrian subjects liable to military service to join the colours, that Austria had already partially mobilised, and had now declared war on Serbia. From what had passed during the Balkan crisis she knew that this act was one which it was impossible without humiliation for Russia to submit to. Had not Russia by mobilising shown that she was in earnest, Austria would have traded on Russia's desire for peace, and would have believed that she could go to any lengths.¹

It was after this that the Czar, who had now received the Emperor's telegram, answered it in a second telegram.

Thanks for your telegram, which is conciliatory, whereas the official message presented by your Ambassador to my Minister was conveyed in a very different tone. I beg you to explain the

It is very instructive that the Chancellor should endorse this view. The infraction of the sovereignty of Serbia did not consist in giving way to military pressure (that is a fate that has befallen many States); it consisted in the requirement that Serbia should consent to the co-operation of Austrian officials in criminal investigations conducted on Serbian soil, and the dismissal of Serbian officials on the orders of the Austrian Government.

The confusion of thought displayed is interesting. It indicates how the modern German doctrine that the State is power affected practice. As the essence of the State is power, and any limitation of its action is a restraint on its power, the State has the right to carry into action every wish, and cannot consent to any limitation from others. If it does so it so far ceases to be power, and ceases to be a State. This is the underlying conception which alone can explain the actions of the German Government. Throughout the whole of the negotiations we find the tacit assumption that the fact that they have determined on a course of action *ipso facto* makes that action a right one, and any one who attempts to check them is thereby guilty of bringing war upon Europe.

¹ E. 78.

divergency. It would be right to give over the Austro-Serbian problem to the Hague Conference. I trust in your wisdom and friendship.

This telegram was entirely ignored, no answer was sent, the proposal to submit the difficulty to the Hague Conference (one which had already been made by Serbia) was passed over in silence, and the telegram was not included in the collection of correspondence published by the German Government, although all the other telegrams which passed between the monarchs were included.¹

At this time the Czar had obviously not signed the ukase ordering mobilisation. We have the impression that the dangers of the situation were being urgently pressed upon him, but that he and M. Sazonof were still successfully postponing the issue of the order, always hoping that some relenting would be found in Austria, that the Emperor would successfully use his influence, that some scheme of mediation would be found. The state of uncertainty continued during most of the afternoon. About three o'clock the German Military Attaché had a conversation with the Chief of the General Staff, who had just come from the Czar.

The Chief of the General Staff has asked me to call on him and he has told me that he has just come from His Majesty.

Major von
Eggeling,
July 29.

He has been requested by the Minister for War to reiterate once more that everything had remained as the Secretary had informed me two days ago. He offered confirmation in writing, and gave me his word of honour in the most solemn manner that nowhere there had been a mobilisation, viz. calling in of a single man or horse up to the present time, *i.e.* three o'clock in the afternoon. He could not assume a guarantee for the future, but he could emphasise that in the fronts directed towards our frontiers His Majesty desired no mobilisation.

As, however, I had received here many pieces of news concerning the calling in of the reserves in different parts of the country, also in Warsaw and in Vilna, I told the General that his statements placed me before a riddle. On his officer's word of honour he replied that such news was wrong, but that possibly here and there a false alarm might have been given.

¹ This telegram was officially published by the Russian Government on January 31, 1915. The German Government have acknowledged that it was received.

I must consider this conversation as an attempt to mislead us as to the extent of the measures hitherto taken in view of the abundant and positive information about the calling in of reserves.¹

The final decision seems to have been given when the news arrived from Vienna that Austria would not agree to the conversations which had been proposed. We do not know exactly at what hour this was, it was at any rate after the conversation with Count Pourtalès in the morning. There also came intelligence that hostilities had actually opened: the Austrians had begun the bombardment of Belgrade. This seems to have finally convinced them that there was no use in waiting any longer, and a circular telegram was sent to the Russian Ambassadors.

At the time of my interview with the German Ambassador, recorded in my preceding telegram, I had not yet received M. Schebeko's telegram of the 15th/28th July.

M. Sazonof,
July 29.

The contents of this telegram amount to a refusal on the part of the Vienna Cabinet to agree to a direct exchange of views with the Russian Government.

Hence nothing remains for us to do but to rely entirely on the British Government to take the initiative in any steps which they may consider advisable.²

We have telegrams from both the English and the French Ambassadors which describe and explain the attitude of the Russian Government.

Austrian Government had now definitely declined direct conversation between Vienna and St. Petersburg. The Minister for

Sir G. Buchanan,
July 29.

Foreign Affairs said he had proposed such an exchange of views on the advice of the German Ambassador. He proposed, when informing German Ambassador of this refusal of Austria's, to urge that a return should be made to your proposal for a conference of four Ambassadors, or, at all events, for an exchange of views between the three Ambassadors less directly interested, yourself, and also the

¹ G. p. 10. There is no confirmation of this suggestion that Reserves had been called in. There is abundant evidence that all preliminary steps had been taken and these, though we are not definitely told of this, would also include putting all frontier garrisons on a war footing. This, however, is a very different thing from calling in the Reserves, and this was not done until the following morning.

² R. 50.

Austrian Ambassador if you thought it advisable. Any arrangement approved by France and England would be acceptable to him, and he did not care what form such conversations took. No time was to be lost, and the only way to avert war was for you to succeed in arriving, by means of conversations with Ambassadors either collectively or individually, at some formula which Austria could be induced to accept. Throughout Russian Government had been perfectly frank and conciliatory, and had done all in their power to maintain peace. If their efforts to maintain peace failed, he trusted that it would be realised by the British public that it was not the fault of the Russian Government. . . . Russia would not precipitate war by crossing frontier immediately, and a week or more would, in any case, elapse before mobilisation was completed. In order to find an issue out of a dangerous situation it was necessary that we should in the meanwhile all work together.¹

And from the French Ambassador :

The direct conversation, to which the Russian Government had invited the Austro-Hungarian Government in a friendly spirit, has been refused by the latter.

M. Paléologue,
July 29.

On the other hand, the Russian General Staff have satisfied themselves that Austria is hurrying on her military preparations against Russia, and is pressing forward the mobilisation which has begun on the Galician frontier. As a result the order to mobilise will be despatched to-night to thirteen army corps, which are destined to operate eventually against Austria.

In spite of the failure of his proposal, M. Sazonof accepts the idea of a conference of the four Powers in London ; further, he does not attach any importance to the title officially given to the discussions, and will support all English efforts in favour of peace.²

During the course of the afternoon or evening M. Sazonof had also another conversation with Count Szápáry. It seems that Count Pourtalès, who was now becoming seriously alarmed and despite his indiscreet language sincerely desired to avoid war, wished to remove the unfavourable impression that had been made by the refusal of Austria to continue conversations. He had gone to the Austrian Ambassador and spoken to him about it. In consequence of this Count Szápáry went to see the Minister. The conversation turned on two points, the general objects of Austria and the nature of Austrian mobilisation.

¹ E. 78.

² F. 91.

As I have learned from the German Ambassador that M. Sazonof is showing himself greatly excited over Your Excellency's alleged disinclination to continue the exchange of ideas with Russia, and over the mobilisation of Austria-Hungary, which is supposed to be much more extensive than is necessary, and, therefore, directed against Russia, I visited the Minister in order to remove certain misunderstandings which seemed to me to exist.

Count Szápáry,
July 29.

The Minister began by making the point that Austria-Hungary categorically refused to continue an exchange of ideas. I agreed on the ground of Your Excellency's telegram of the 28th of July that Your Excellency had indeed declined, after all that had occurred, to discuss the wording of the Note, and in general the Austro-Hungarian-Serbian conflict, but that I must make it clear that I was in a position to suggest a much broader basis of discussion in declaring that we had no desire to injure any Russian interests, that we had no intention, naturally on the assumption that the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia remained localised, of annexing Serbian territory, and that we also had no thoughts of touching the sovereignty of Serbia. I was convinced that your Excellency would always be ready to keep in touch with St. Petersburg with regard to Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests.

M. Sazonof gave me to understand that he had been convinced of this so far as territory was concerned, but so far as the sovereignty of the country was at stake he must continue to hold the opinion that to force on Serbia our conditions would result in Serbia becoming a vassal State. This, however, would upset the equilibrium in the Balkans, and this was how Russian interests became involved. He returned to the question of a discussion of the Note, the action of Sir E. Grey, etc., and he desired again to point out to me that they recognised our legitimate interest, and desired to give it full satisfaction, but that this should be clothed in a form which would be acceptable to Serbia. I expressed the view that this was not a Russian interest but a Serbian one, whereupon M. Sazonof claimed that Russian interests were in this case Serbian interests, so that I was obliged to make an end of the vicious circle by going on to a new topic.

At the end the question of mobilisation was raised :

I mentioned that I had heard that there was a feeling of anxiety in Russia, because we had mobilised eight corps for action against Serbia. M. Sazonof assured me that it was not he, who knew nothing about this, but the Chief of the General Staff who had expressed this anxiety. I endeavoured to convince the Minister that every unprejudiced person could easily be persuaded that our southern corps could not constitute a menace for Russia.

I indicated to the Minister that it would be as well if his Imperial Master were informed of the true situation, more especially as it was urgently necessary, if it was desired to maintain peace, that a speedy end should be put to the military competition which now threatened to set in on the ground of false news. M. Sazonof very characteristically expressed the view that *he could communicate this to the Chief of the General Staff, for he saw His Majesty every day.*

The Minister further informed me that a ukase would be signed to-day, which would give orders for a mobilisation in a somewhat extended form. He was able, however, to assure me in the most official manner that these troops were not intended to attack us. They would only stand under arms in case Russian interests in the Balkans should be in danger. An explanatory Note would make this clear for the question here was a measure of prudence which the Emperor Nicholas had found to be justified, since we, who in any case have the advantage of quicker mobilisation, have now also already so great a start. In earnest words I drew M. Sazonof's attention to the impression which such a measure would make in our country. I went on to express doubt whether the explanatory Note would be calculated to soften the impression, whereupon the Minister again gave expression to assurances regarding the harmlessness (!) of this measure.¹

We see then the two points of view. The Ambassador pressed that Austrian mobilisation was not a danger to Russia as it was only directed against Serbia. This is quite true; no one supposed that these army corps were intended to march upon Russia; but this explanation entirely ignores the essential fact that in attacking Serbia the Austrian army would in effect be delivering a blow against Russia. M. Sazonof's explanation is quite correct; Russian mobilisation was not primarily intended to protect Russia but to put Russia into such a position that she would be able effectively to protect Russian interests in the Balkans in case they should be endangered by Austrian operations in Serbia. It was a necessary measure of protection. There was no other means by which Russia could protect Serbia; the other method of negotiations Austria had refused to accept, for though offering to negotiate she refused to allow the discussions to include a settlement of the Serbian question. Russian mobilisation only became a method of protecting Russia herself

¹ A. 47. It will be noted that there is no reference to any instructions.

in consequence of the German threats; this put a completely different complexion upon the whole matter.

The earlier part of the conversation also was no good, these friendly assurances must be converted into some definite undertaking, either as to the terms to be demanded from Serbia or as to the delay or limitation of the military operations. No prospect was held out of either of these. Indeed, on this day the Austrian Government were pressing the German Government to continue their protest against Russian mobilisation, and were also assuring them that in their military operations against Serbia, Austria would not be diverted from her path.

I have just heard from Herr von Tschirschky, that the Russian Ambassador has told him that he has been notified by his Government that the military districts of Kieff, Odessa, Count Berchtold,
July 29. Moscow, and Kasan are being mobilised. He said

that Russia was outraged in her honour as a Great Power, and was obliged to take corresponding measures. The Russian mobilisation is confirmed by the commanders of our Galician forces, and, according to a communication from the Imperial and Royal Military Attaché, in a conversation which M. Sazonof had to-day with the German Ambassador it was no longer denied.

I request Your Excellency to bring the above without delay to the knowledge of the German Government, and at the same time to emphasise that if the Russian measures of mobilisation are not put a stop to without delay, our general mobilisation would have, on military grounds, to follow at once.

As a last effort to maintain the peace of Europe, I considered it desirable that our representative and the representative of Germany at St. Petersburg, and, if necessary, at Paris, should at once be instructed to declare to the Governments to whom they are accredited, in a friendly manner, that the continuation of the Russian mobilisation would have as a result counter-measures in Germany and Austria-Hungary, which must lead to serious consequences.

Your Excellency will add that, as can be understood, in our military operations against Serbia we will not allow ourselves to be diverted from our path.

The Imperial and Royal Ambassadors at St. Petersburg and Paris are receiving identical instructions to make the above declaration as soon as their German colleague receives similar instructions.¹

¹ A. 48. ; cf. also A. 56, p. 253.

It is to be noted that this was sent on information given by the German Ambassador and probably on his suggestion.

The Austrian Ambassador never made the declaration, although the German did so.

Later in the day Count Pourtalès again called to see M. Sazonof, and on this occasion told him that Austrian mobilisation would be answered by German mobilisation; they had already been told that this meant war.

The German Ambassador to-day informed me of the decision of his Government to mobilise, if Russia did not stop her military preparations.¹ Now, in point of fact, we only began these preparations in consequence of the mobilisation already undertaken by Austria, and owing to her evident unwillingness to accept any means of arriving at a peaceful settlement of her dispute with Serbia.

M. Sazonof,
July 29.

As we cannot comply with the wishes of Germany, we have no alternative but to hasten on our own military preparations and to assume that war is probably inevitable. Please inform the French Government of this, and add that we are sincerely grateful to them for the declaration which the French Ambassador made to me on their behalf, to the effect that we could count fully upon the assistance of our ally, France. In the existing circumstances, that declaration is especially valuable to us.²

We hear of this from France :

The German Ambassador came to tell M. Sazonof that if Russia does not stop her military preparations the German army will receive the order to mobilise.

M. Paléologue,
July 29.

M. Sazonof replied that the Russian preparations have been caused, on the one hand, by the obstinate and uncompromising attitude of Austria, and on the other hand by the fact that eight Austro-Hungarian army corps are already mobilised.

The tone in which Count Pourtalès delivered this communication has decided the Russian Government this very night to order

¹ No reference to this conversation or to this announcement is to be found in the German White book. If we had only this to depend upon we should know nothing of it, and yet it was one of the most important points in the whole negotiations. It was by this that the future action of Russia was chiefly guided. That the statement by M. Sazonof is correct is, however, shown by a telegram from the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin: "A telegram has to-day been sent to St. Petersburg stating that owing to the further progress of the Russian measures of mobilisation Germany might be brought to mobilise." (A. 46.)

² R. 58.

the mobilisation of the thirteen army corps which are to operate against Austria.¹

M. Isvolsky came to-night to tell me that the German Ambassador has notified M. Sazonof of the decision of his Government to mobilise the army if Russia does not cease her military preparations.

M. René Viviani,
July 30.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czar points out that these preparations were only commenced after Austria had mobilised eight army corps and had refused to arrange peacefully her differences with Serbia. M. Sazonof declares that in these circumstances Russia can only expedite her arming and consider war as imminent, that she counts on the help of France as an ally, and that she considers it desirable that England should join Russia and France without loss of time.²

President of the Republic tells me that the Russian Government have been informed by the German Government that unless Russia stops her mobilisation Germany would mobilise.³

Sir F. Bertie,
July 30.

From this time, then, the decision to mobilise was made; the immediate occasion of it was the refusal of conversations by Austria, joined to the threatening language used by Germany. The German attitude, however, also involved further and more serious considerations; if Germany was to consider mobilisation against Austria as a reason for mobilisation and for war, was it safe to confine themselves to a partial mobilisation? Was it not necessary at once to take steps to defend themselves against the attack of which they had now been clearly warned?

That night another telegram arrived from the German Emperor, which was sent at 6.30 p.m. It brought no relief.

I have received your telegram and I share your desire for the preservation of peace. However, I cannot—as I told you in my first telegram—consider the action of Austria-Hungary as an “ignominious war.” Austria-Hungary knows from experience that the promises of Serbia as long as they are merely on paper are entirely unreliable.

According to my opinion the action of Austria-Hungary is to be considered as an attempt to receive a full guarantee that the promises of Serbia are effectively translated into deeds. In this opinion I am strengthened by the explanation of the Austrian Cabinet that Austria-Hungary intended no territorial gain at the expense of Serbia. I am therefore of opinion that it is perfectly possible for Russia to remain a spectator in the Austro-Serbian

¹ F. 100.

² F. 101.

³ E. 99.

war without drawing Europe into the most terrible war it has ever seen. I believe that a direct understanding is possible and desirable between your Government and Vienna, an understanding which—as I have already telegraphed you—my Government endeavours to aid with all possible effort. Naturally military measures by Russia, which might be construed as a menace by Austria-Hungary, would accelerate a calamity which both of us desire to avoid and would undermine my position as mediator, which—upon your appeal to my friendship and aid—I willingly accepted.

In this he merely reiterates the point that all that Austria was trying to get was full guarantee from Serbia, that he was confirmed in this opinion by Austria's promise not to annex Serbian territory, and the suggestion in the words "I am therefore of opinion that it is perfectly possible for Russia to remain a spectator in the Austro-Serbian war without drawing Europe into the most terrible war it has ever seen" is, of course, just what Russia had definitely determined that she could not afford to accept. The re-statement from the highest source that this continued to be the view of the German Government, especially when accompanied by the requirement that Russia should be not merely a spectator, but an unarmed spectator, was most alarming.

It will be noted that there is no word or indication of Austria staying her hand; she had already mobilised and declared war, was making preparations on the Russian frontier, was beginning to invade Serbia; the Emperor spoke as if a real Serbian war, *i.e.* not a mere military demonstration, was a certainty, and yet Russia was warned that she must not mobilise even against Austria.

A serious inaccuracy may also be noted. The Emperor speaks of the *work of mediation* which he had undertaken upon the Czar's appeal. As a matter of fact the Czar had not asked him to mediate, he had asked him to restrain his ally, *i.e.* to stop Austria from pressing on against Serbia. This is quite a different thing. The Emperor took no notice of this appeal, he did not even pretend that he was trying to restrain Austria, and the general effect of the telegram was that he had no intention of doing so, that he supported Austria in her warlike policy, but would look on any precautionary measures of Russia as a threat to Germany as well as Austria.

This, then, was the situation when the definite order for partial mobilisation against Austria was finally determined on. Let us review the causes which led up to it. Russia had repeatedly explained that she could not be a passive spectator in a war against Serbia, and had officially warned the German Government of the preparations which were being made for mobilisation. At the same time, in order to avoid the dangerous situation to which this would necessarily lead, she made repeated suggestions for compromise or mediation. Every one of these—the prolongation of the time-limit, the suspension of operations, conversations with Austria, mediation by the four Powers, had been rejected. Every communication from Germany had been to the effect that Austria would accept no mediation and would not stay her hand. Austria herself had pressed on with the greatest precipitation; she had mobilised a part of her army, declared war, begun operations and bombarded Belgrade. A proclamation of the Emperor had increased a determined war spirit among the people. If Russia did not now mobilise it was quite clear that there would at once be an invasion of Serbia in great style; within a few days the Serbian army, which was not prepared, might be crushed, and she would be confronted with the situation which it was her whole object to avoid.

What possible alternative was there open to them? Had she delayed a moment longer she would have deserted her ally, and her position would have been irrevocably compromised.

The crisis therefore had now come. All depended on how Germany would act. There can be little doubt as to what her intentions were. By refusing all the proposals for mediation she and her ally were placed in the very grave situation that it was impossible now to recede without giving to the world the impression that they were giving way before Russia's threats. For this they were entirely responsible. Great Britain had offered a course which would have avoided the difficulty; if the mediation of the four Powers had begun, a general demand from Europe would have been addressed to Russia that further military preparations should be suspended while the discussions were proceeding, and at the same time a similar demand would have been addressed to Austria asking her to suspend operations against Serbia. To mediation of this kind both Powers could, without loss of dignity, have given way. Now the situation was very

difficult. Germany was responsible for the failure of this proposal, but Germany could not view with indifference the progress of military preparations in Russia. She had, however, by her own act deprived herself of any assistance from other Powers in stopping them ; now the only way to do so would be herself to address some kind of protest to Russia, and this could only make matters worse, for a protest from a single Power must take the nature of a threat.

But in truth, according to the statements of the German Government itself, this was the situation which they had throughout foreseen would probably arise, and for which they were quite prepared. They had deliberately not accepted mediation because they wished for a trial of strength with Russia. It was in accordance with this policy that the German Emperor had warned the Czar that any mobilisation would be regarded as a threat to Germany. Again, in accordance with this Count Pourtalès had officially informed the Russian Government that mobilisation by Russia would be answered by similar measures by Germany.

Everything seemed to show that matters were working up with the greatest rapidity to a crisis ; and the crisis would have only one form, the public issue by Germany of a proclamation preparatory to putting the German army on a war footing.

II

We must now return to Berlin. That evening a council was held at Potsdam in the presence of the Emperor, at which both his military and civil advisers were present. It was at this council that the final decision was made. Until we know what took place the veil which hangs over the actions of the German Government will not be removed. It is for the German nation when the time comes to require that they should be told this. What were the personal wishes of the Emperor ? What was the advice given by the Imperial Chancellor ? These are matters of which we still have merely the vaguest and wildest rumours. We have not been admitted into the secrets of the Government of Germany, all we can do is to judge them by their actions.

We have first to help us the despatch to the Governments

of Germany sent on the previous day, which shows us that an immediate outbreak of war with Russia was regarded as almost inevitable. We cannot doubt that the council decided that the time had come for it.

We have the usual rumours, which in this case were at least consistent with one another. *The Times* correspondent writes the next morning: "No secret, I understand, is made to the Foreign Office this morning of the fact that the military authorities were pressing for immediate mobilisation, and that a decision must be reached within a day or two . . . imminence of mobilisation is . . . so obvious that there is little secret about the preliminary preparations that are being made."

Our real knowledge comes, however, not from this, but from what actually happened after the council separated. Important steps were taken both by the Chancellor and the Emperor.

The Chancellor reached Berlin about ten o'clock at night. He immediately asked Sir Edward Goschen to come and see him. It might have been hoped and expected that he asked for this interview in order that he might be able to give his assent, so long delayed, to one of the numerous proposals for mediation which during the last three days had been the subject of so many conversations. It might have been hoped that Germany was willing to grasp the hand which England had held out, and that the two Powers might agree on the method by which the difficulty was to be removed. It is probable that with some such expectation Sir Edward Goschen passed along the Wilhelmstrasse from the British Embassy to the Palace of the Imperial Chancellor. If so, a great disappointment and surprise was awaiting him. What Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg was to ask was not the co-operation of Great Britain in maintaining peace, but the neutrality of Britain in the war which was now to be regarded as inevitable.

I was asked to call upon the Chancellor to-night. His Excellency had just returned from Potsdam.

He said that should Austria be attacked by
Sir E. Goschen, July 29. Russia a European conflagration might, he feared, become inevitable, owing to Germany's obligations as Austria's ally, in spite of his continued efforts to maintain peace. He then proceeded to make the following strong bid for British neutrality.¹

¹ E. 85.

This is not the place to consider the details of the terms he offered ; it is sufficient here to point out that these proposals would not have been made unless the council had practically determined not to give way to Russia, not to advise Austria to stay her hand, not to accept any form of mediation, but to continue without pause or wavering in the procedure which inevitably led straight to war.

Up to this moment all communications to England had been confined to suggestions for mediation. The negotiations had been friendly and even conciliatory, although every single one of the English suggestions had been in effect refused. Now there came suddenly like a flash of lightning this intimation ; what could it mean except that even the appearance of seeking a peaceful solution was now put aside. The proposals made were of such a kind that Sir E. Goschen could hold out no hope that they would be accepted, and they were promptly refused the next day by the British Government.

Shortly before this, on Wednesday afternoon, there had also taken place in London an interview between Sir E. Grey and Prince Lichnowsky, in which the former had given a serious warning that if war ensued it would not be possible to depend on England keeping out of it.¹ We do not know when the news of this reached Berlin ; but anyhow, from Thursday morning the German Government were fully warned that if they went to war with Russia and France they would probably have to meet Great Britain as well.

Very late that night, at 1.30 a.m., after this interview and probably after information had come from Prince Lichnowsky concerning his interview with Sir E. Grey, another telegram was sent by the Emperor to the Czar. It is very strongly worded, it is imperious in tone, and is a direct personal appeal to the Czar warning him that if he mobilises against Austria he will be responsible for war. There is in it not the slightest sign of weakening in the position that Germany has taken up, no recognition that the action of Austria may have been responsible for the crisis that has arisen, and no hopes are held out that if Russia complies she will get any recognition of her wishes. All he offers is his mediation—and that had never been asked for :

¹ For a fuller discussion of the relations with Great Britain, see below, Chapter XV.

Germany was far too closely identified with Austria for him to hold the position of mediator.

My Ambassador has instructions to direct the attention of your Government to the dangers and serious consequences of a mobilisation; I have told you the same in my last telegram. Austria-Hungary has mobilised only against Serbia, and only a part of her army. If Russia, as seems to be the case according to your advice and that of your Government, mobilises against Austria-Hungary, the part of the mediator with which you have entrusted me in such friendly manner, and which I have accepted upon your express desire, is threatened if not made impossible. The entire weight of decision now rests upon your shoulders, you have to bear the responsibility for war or peace.¹

Strange though it may appear, it is quite possible that this was despatched under the real belief that it might help the cause of peace. And indeed it was in a way calculated to do so; for as Germany was determined, and intended to impose her will, by war if necessary, the only hope of peace was that Russia would submit to her will. But it was based on a profound blindness to human nature. It could have no effect except to strengthen the opposition in Russia, and to convince them that they must at once prepare for war with Germany. The same conviction that the only way to peace was acquiescence in the will of Germany is shown in a message sent next day by Prince Henry, who had just returned from a visit to England, to the King.

William is very troubled, and is doing his utmost to carry out the Czar's request of working for the maintenance of peace. He is in continuous telegraphic correspondence with Nicholas, who to-day confirms the news that he has ordered military measures which are equivalent to mobilisation, and that these measures were begun five days ago.² We have, in addition, received the information that France is also making military preparations while we have as yet taken none. We may, however, be compelled to take them at any moment if our neighbours continue their preparations. This would mean a European war. If you are really and earnestly anxious to prevent this cruel calamity, *may I suggest that you should, by your influence, try to secure the neutrality of France and Russia?* That would, I believe, be of the greatest possible use.

¹ German White Book, Exhibit 23.

² See p. 216.

I think this is a certain and perhaps the only chance of preserving peace. I should like to add that Germany and England ought to support each other more now than ever, in order to avoid a terrible catastrophe which otherwise appears inevitable. Believe me that William is filled with the greatest sincerity in his efforts for the maintenance of peace. But the military preparations of both his neighbours may compel him at last to follow their example in order to assure the safety of his country, which otherwise would remain defenceless. I have informed William of my telegram to you, and hope you will take my communication in the same friendly spirit which has prompted it.¹

Here again it is quite clearly stated that "perhaps the only chance of preserving peace" is that France and Russia should remain neutral: neutral, that is, as between Austria and Serbia. What possible use or effect could a statement of this kind have at this period of the negotiations? It was simply going back to the very first stage, and is, in fact, a threat that Germany will go to war rather than let Russia intervene to help Serbia.

Herr von Jagow during the course of the day saw Sir E. Goschen and M. Cambon, and in both cases warned them that German mobilisation was imminent.

He begged me to impress on you difficulty of Germany's position in view of Russian mobilisation and military measures which he hears are being taken in France. Beyond recall of officers on leave—a measure which had been officially taken after, and not before, visit of French Ambassador yesterday—Imperial Government had done nothing special in way of military preparations. Something, however, would have soon to be done, for it might be too late, and when they mobilised they would have to mobilise on three sides. He regretted this, as he knew France did not desire war, but it would be a military necessity.²

Sir E. Goschen,
July 30.

M. Cambon also telegraphs :

Herr von Jagow then spoke to me of the Russian mobilisation on the Austrian frontier; he told me that this mobilisation compromised the success of all intervention with Austria, and that everything depended on it. He added that he feared that Austria would mobilise completely as a result of a partial Russian mobilisation, and this might cause as a countermeasure complete Russian mobilisation and consequently that of Germany.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 30.

¹ The King's answer will be found below, p. 229.

² E. 98.

I pointed out to the Secretary of State that he had himself told me that Germany would only consider herself obliged to mobilise if Russia mobilised on her German frontiers, and that this was not being done. He replied that this was true, but that the heads of the army were insisting on it, for every delay is a loss of strength for the German army, and "that the words of which I reminded him did not constitute a firm engagement on his part."

The impression which I received from this conversation is that the chances of peace have again decreased.¹

It is clear that matters have now got into the hands of the General Staff.

At Berlin, then, there was no wavering; Austria must have a free hand, Russia must submit, she could not be allowed to make any preparations to defend Serbia. The order for mobilisation had not yet been given, but it was clearly impending. On that morning a curious interlude took place. A special edition of the *Lokal Anzeiger*, and some other papers, was published about mid-day stating that the order for mobilising the army and navy had been issued. It was quickly recalled, and an official contradiction issued. None the less this could not fail to be interpreted as an additional evidence of the extreme gravity of the situation. The *Lokal Anzeiger* is a paper reputed to be in the confidence of the Foreign Office; the mistake—or accident—if accident it was, could not have been made unless it had been known that the issue of the order was contemplated at any moment.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has just telephoned that the news of the mobilisation of the German army and fleet, which has just been announced, is false; that the news sheets
M. Swerbéef, July 30. had been printed in advance so as to be ready for all eventualities, and that they were put on sale in the afternoon, but that they have now been confiscated.²

We get a similar account from the French Ambassador:

It seems certain that the Extraordinary Council held yesterday evening at Potsdam with the military authorities under the presidency of the Emperor decided on mobilisation,
M. Jules Cambon, July 30. and this explains the preparation of the special edition of the *Lokal Anzeiger*, but that from various causes (the declaration of England that she reserved her entire

¹ F. 109.

² R. 62.

liberty of action, the exchange of telegrams between the Czar and William II) the serious measures which had been decided upon were suspended.

One of the Ambassadors with whom I have very close relations saw Herr von Zimmermann at two o'clock. According to him the military authorities are very anxious that mobilisation should be ordered, because every delay makes Germany lose some of her advantages. Nevertheless up to the present the haste of the General Staff, which sees war in mobilisation, had been successfully prevented. In any case mobilisation may be decided upon at any moment. I do not know who has issued in the *Lokal Anzeiger*, a paper which is usually semi-official, premature news calculated to cause excitement in France.

Further, I have the strongest reasons to believe that all the measures for mobilisation which can be taken before the publication of the general order of mobilisation have already been taken here, and that they are anxious here to make us publish our mobilisation first in order to attribute the responsibility to us.¹

These indications are sufficient to enable us to form some conjecture as to what took place at the meeting of the Council. First of all the general policy was confirmed and maintained; the attitude of the circular despatch to the German Governments on the previous day was continued, and this of course meant war with Russia almost immediately. On the general principle there was clearly no disposition to give way; all proposals for mediation were rejected now as before. This is the important thing, and this justifies us in saying that the decision was for war.

There clearly were two matters which must have occupied attention. The first was the relations with Great Britain. All accounts show that Germany was very anxious to avoid having to meet Great Britain as well as France and Russia. We therefore find that the Chancellor was instructed to sound Great Britain as to neutrality, and no doubt it was determined at any rate to postpone any irrevocable measure of mobilisation until this had been done. This would be quite sufficient reason why the mobilisation order was not immediately given but was postponed for at least a day.

The second was one on which the military advisers would lay great stress, viz. whether mobilisation should at once be ordered now that Russia had officially announced the mobilisation of part

¹ F. 105.

of her army. We can have no doubt that the General Staff pressed for this. On the other hand, it is probable that the view was maintained that German mobilisation (which meant war) should for political reasons not be published until the complete mobilisation of the Russian army, but that in the meantime all preliminary steps should be taken. Those who took this view seem for the moment to have gained the ascendancy, and this view, combined with the uncertainty as to the relations with Great Britain, prevented an immediate order for mobilisation being issued.

Meanwhile the Emperor, probably on his own initiative, made a last characteristic effort to impose his will upon the Czar, and during the pause which ensued during Thursday the time was, as we shall see, filled up by suggestions of further conversations between Austria and Russia.

The net result is this : that the policy which inevitably meant war was to be persisted in, but that there should be delay of a few hours, at least before the final steps should be taken.

CHAPTER IX

RUSSIAN MOBILISATION

I

We must now return to Russia.

Very late on Wednesday night an interesting episode* took place which seemed for the moment to hold out hopes that after all the situation was not irretrievable. Count Pourtalès came again to see M. Sazonof. We have several accounts of the interview.

The German Ambassador, who has just left me, has asked whether Russia would not be satisfied with the promise which Austria might give—that she would not violate the integrity of the Kingdom of Serbia—and whether we could not indicate upon what conditions we would agree to suspend our military preparations. I dictated to him the following declaration to be forwarded to Berlin for immediate action :

“If Austria, recognising that the Austro-Serbian question has become a question of European interest, declares herself ready to eliminate from her ultimatum such points as violate the sovereign rights of Serbia, Russia undertakes to stop her military preparations.”

Please inform me at once by telegraph what attitude the German Government will adopt in face of this fresh proof of our desire to do the utmost possible for a peaceful settlement of the question, for we cannot allow such discussions to continue solely in order that Germany and Austria may gain time for their military preparations.¹

Sir George Buchanan telegraphs :

German Ambassador had a second interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs at 2 a.m., when former completely broke down on

¹ R. 60.

seeing that war was inevitable. He appealed to M. Sazonof to make some suggestion which he could telegraph to German Government as a last hope. M. Sazonof accordingly drew up and handed to German Ambassador a formula in French.

Preparations for general mobilisation will be proceeded with if this proposal is rejected by Austria, and inevitable result will be a European war. Excitement here has reached such a pitch that, if Austria refuses to make a concession, Russia cannot hold back, and now that she knows that Germany is arming, she can hardly postpone, for strategical reasons, converting partial into general mobilisation.¹

The German Ambassador came to-night and again urged on M. Sazonof, but in less categorical terms, that Russia should cease her military preparations, and affirmed that Austria would not infringe the territorial integrity of Serbia :

"It is not only the territorial integrity of Serbia which we must safeguard," answered M. Sazonof, "but also her independence and her sovereignty. We cannot allow Serbia to become a vassal of Austria."

M. Sazonof added : "The situation is too serious for me not to tell you all that is in my mind. By intervening at St. Petersburg while she refuses to intervene at Vienna, Germany is only seeking to gain time so as to allow Austria to crush the little Serbian kingdom before Russia can come to its aid. But the Emperor Nicholas is so anxious to prevent war that I am going to make a new proposal to you in his name. . . .

Count Pourtalès promised to support this proposal with his Government.

In the mind of M. Sazonof, the acceptance of this proposal by Austria would have, as a logical corollary, the opening of a discussion by the Powers in London.

The Russian Government again show by their attitude that they are neglecting nothing in order to stop the conflict.²

A further account is also given by Sir Francis Bertie in a telegram from Paris :

President of the Republic tells me that the Russian Government have been informed by the German Government that unless Russia stops her mobilisation Germany would mobilise. But a further report, since received from St. Petersburg, states that the German communication had been modified, and was now a request to be informed on what conditions Russia would consent to demobilisation. The

Sir F. Bertie,
July 30.

¹ E. 97.

² F. 103.

answer given is that she agrees to do so on condition that Austria-Hungary gives an assurance that she will respect the sovereignty of Serbia and submit certain of the demands of the Austrian Note, which Serbia has not accepted, to an international discussion.

President thinks that these conditions will not be accepted by Austria. He is convinced that peace between the Powers is in the hands of Great Britain. If His Majesty's Government announced that England would come to the aid of France in the event of a conflict between France and Germany as a result of the present differences between Austria and Serbia, there would be no war, for Germany would at once modify her attitude.¹

This offer was a very important one; it gave an opportunity of bringing about the result which the German Government desired—that is, a cessation of Russian military preparations. It was not, indeed, an unconditional offer; to stop mobilisation without conditions would have been to surrender to Austria the full control of the Western Balkans. The essence of the conditions was quite reasonable; it was simply that the sovereignty of Serbia should be respected, so that it should not be brought under Austrian control; the discussion of what this meant in practice could easily have been submitted to arbitration and the guarantees to be given by Serbia have been arranged.

Sir F. Bertie assumes that this proposal was made by the German Government, and in fact it had always been supposed that in this action of Count Pourtalès was evidence of some desire on their part to soften the effect of the communication made earlier that evening. Probably, however, this is not the case, and this action was taken by the Ambassador on his own responsibility. This at least appears from the statement of December 21st.

The French Ambassador Paléologue maintains in his despatch of the 30th of July, No. 133, that M. Sazonof said to the German Ambassador that in order to show the conciliatory and peaceful intentions of the Czar, he was willing to make a new proposal to him in the name of His Majesty. In reality the course of events was as follows: When M. Sazonof had characterised the declaration of Austria-Hungary that she would not touch the integrity of the Serbian territory as insufficient, Count Pourtalès begged him, in order not to break off the thread of negotiations, for a precise

¹ E. 99.

statement of the minimum of Russian requirements from Austria-Hungary.¹ Count Pourtalès desired at the same time by some concession to make a compromise possible. Thereupon, M. Sazonof wrote out in the presence of the Ambassador a formula which in all essential points maintained the old Russian requirements. After Count Pourtalès had expressly laid stress on the fact that he considered that there was no prospect of the acceptance of these requirements by Austria-Hungary, he declared himself ready to *communicate* the formula to his Government. The statement of the French Yellow Book that he promised to support the formula to his Government is not correct.

Taken together with the fact that no instructions are mentioned, and that this interview and this offer are not mentioned in the German White Book, we may take it that Count Pourtalès was not acting under instructions from Berlin. Perhaps he had been influenced by the strong representations made to him by Sir George Buchanan; perhaps he was guided merely by his natural desire to avoid war with the State to which he had been accredited for so many years; perhaps he was influenced by a sudden feeling of regret which came over him late at night. Anyhow, he seems to have taken this step on his own responsibility and endeavoured, as did also, as we shall find later, the German Ambassador in England, to find some escape from the hard conditions imposed by his own Government. It was an action entirely creditable to him, but reading between the lines of the German communication one sees that this action was inconvenient to them.

II

The situation on Thursday morning therefore was that the Russian Government had officially proclaimed the mobilisation of thirteen army corps, and preparations for the mobilisation of

¹ This is not quite correct. He asked for the conditions on which Russia would suspend military operations; this is a different thing. Russia herself was not proposing to break off negotiations even if she armed; as we shall see, she was willing to continue the discussion on much less favourable conditions. If Austria modified the ultimatum she would not mobilise: if she refused this she would mobilise, but would continue the discussion on a different basis.

the whole army were now being carried forward. The first news of this had brought from Berlin a message stating that if Russia did not stop her mobilisation Germany would mobilise. The later interview, however, had rather relieved the situation.

The interest of Thursday is that it might elucidate the effect on the European situation of Russian partial mobilisation, and this must bring the determination whether the whole army was to be mobilised.

As regards Austria, the effect is remarkable. In a conversation with Sir M. de Bunsen, the Russian Ambassador said that he "hopes that Russian mobilisation will be regarded by Austria as what it is, *i.e.* a clear intimation that Russia must be consulted regarding the fate of Serbia, but he does not know how the Austrian Government are taking it." He added that "Russia must have an assurance that Serbia will not be crushed, but she would understand that Austria-Hungary is compelled to exact from Serbia measures which will secure her Slav Provinces from the continuance of hostile propaganda from Serbian territory."¹

This attitude was quite favourable to an understanding between Austria and Russia, and a further telegram from Vienna corroborates this view:

The Russian Ambassador gave the French Ambassador and myself this afternoon at the French Embassy, where I happened to be, an account of his interview with the Minister
Sir M. de Bunsen, for Foreign Affairs, which he said was quite friendly.
 July 30.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs had told him that as Russia had mobilised, Austria must, of course, do the same. This, however, should not be regarded as a threat, but merely as the adoption of military precautions similar to those which had been taken across the frontier. He said he had no objection to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg continuing their conversations, although he did not say that they could be resumed on the basis of the Serbian reply.

On the whole the Russian Ambassador is not dissatisfied. He had begun to make his preparations for his departure on the strength of a rumour that Austria would declare war in reply to mobilisation. He now hopes that something may yet be done to prevent war with Austria.²

We have here a reference to a continuation of conversations

¹ E. 95.

² E. 96.

between Vienna and St. Petersburg. It will be remembered that these separate conversations had broken down on Tuesday because Austria would not, after the declaration of war, negotiate on the basis of a revision of the ultimatum. On this day, however, there was in fact a renewal of the idea ; all the German statements lay great stress upon them and attribute them to the action of the German Government, and to these we must now turn.

The German White Book says :

In reply to various inquiries concerning reasons for its threatening attitude, the Russian Government repeatedly pointed out that Austria-Hungary had commenced no conversation in St. Petersburg. The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in St. Petersburg was therefore instructed on July 29th¹ at our suggestion, to enter into such conversation with Sazonof. Count Szápáry was empowered to explain to the Russian Minister the Note to Serbia, though it had been overtaken by the state of war, and to accept any suggestion on the part of Russia,² as well as to discuss with Sazonof all questions touching directly upon the Austro-Russian relations.

The Emperor's telegram of Wednesday also says : "I believe that a direct understanding is possible and desirable between your Government and Vienna ; an understanding which, as I have already telegraphed to you, my Government endeavours to aid with all possible effort."

These statements are confirmed by news which the French Ambassador at Vienna received from Berlin : "The German Ambassador at Vienna is instructed to speak seriously to the Austro-Hungarian Government against acting in a manner calculated to provoke a European war ;"³ and by a telegram from Rome :

I learnt from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who sent for me this evening, that the Austrian Government had declined to continue the direct exchange of views with the
 Sir R. Rodd,
 July 30. Russian Government. But he had reason to believe that Germany was now disposed to give more conciliatory advice to Austria, as she seemed convinced that we should act with France and Russia, and was most anxious to avoid issue with us.⁴

¹ This is incorrect ; the instructions were not sent till the following day.

² This is also incorrect ; no such instructions were given. See A. 49.

³ E. 95.

⁴ E. 106.

We may then take it that on this day the German Government were suggesting to Austria to begin again the conversations which had been dropped.

Let us see what information is available as to their character and object.

Unfortunately, we have not in its original form any account of the method in which this suggestion was made.

We have, however, what may be called a second-hand statement as to it.

Sir Edward Goschen, in an account of a conversation with the Imperial Chancellor on Wednesday, tells us :

I was sent for again to-day by the Imperial Chancellor, who told me that he regretted to state that the Austro-Hungarian Government, to whom he had at once communicated your opinion, had answered that events had marched too rapidly, and that it was therefore too late to act upon your suggestion that the Serbian reply might form the basis of discussion. His Excellency had, on receiving their reply, dispatched a message to Vienna, in which he explained that, although a certain desire had, in his opinion, been shown in the Serbian reply to meet the demands of Austria, he understood entirely that, without some sure guarantees that Serbia would carry out in their entirety the demands made upon her, the Austro-Hungarian Government could not rest satisfied in view of their past experience. He had then gone on to say that the hostilities which were about to be undertaken against Serbia had presumably the exclusive object of securing such guarantees, seeing that the Austrian Government already assured the Russian Government that they had no territorial designs.

He advised the Austro-Hungarian Government, should this view be correct, to speak openly in this sense. The holding of such language would, he hoped, eliminate all possible misunderstandings.

As yet, he told me, he had not received a reply from Vienna.

From the fact that he had gone so far in the matter of giving advice at Vienna, his Excellency hoped that you would realise that he was sincerely doing all in his power to prevent danger of European complications.

The fact of his communicating this information to you was a proof of the confidence which he felt in you and evidence of his anxiety that you should know he was doing his best to support your efforts in the cause of general peace, efforts which he sincerely appreciated.¹

¹ E. 75.

Here, then, we have at last a definite suggestion from Berlin. We must consider it further. First as to the form—there is advice, but there is no pressure; a suggestion is thrown out, but it is not—at least, if we are to judge by this account—accompanied by any language which would show that the German Government was throwing the whole weight of its influence into inducing Austria to accept the advice. If this was all that Germany was willing to do to prevent danger of European complications, we can only say that it was very little. But of course the telegram to Vienna which has not been published may have been more strongly worded. And now as to the nature of the advice sent, it will be seen that there is not the slightest suggestion or desire expressed that it might be wiser for Austria to avail herself of the offered mediation; there is no suggestion that she might well deviate in any way from her chosen course of going to war with Serbia and pressing her attack home; there is no suggestion that she might offer to come to any kind of formal agreement with Russia or give anything in the nature of a formal pledge as to the limit of her designs, except as to the one point as to annexation of territory. All that is suggested is that she should give a general explanation and assurance, which could not differ in the least from the general explanation which had already been given on Saturday and Sunday.

Russia is to give up her claim to be heard in the Serbian problem on a general and vague declaration that the Austrian Government had no territorial designs. Was there any likelihood that Russia would accept this suggestion? She perhaps might do so, but it would clearly have to be on one condition: she might conceivably stand by, leave Austria a free hand and watch what she really did in Serbia, trusting to her assurances of loyalty that she would not press her advantage too far, so as to crush Serbia or to interfere with Russian interests; but if she consented to adopt this waiting policy she could only do so if she herself mobilised at least a considerable part of her army, so that if in the course of the operations some critical point suddenly arose, she would at once be able to interfere effectively, and not be placed in a position of great disadvantage as regards Austria; and there must also be some definite pledge that the occupation of Serbian territory should be limited and not extend to the whole.

What it comes to, then, is this: that this suggestion would carry with it, as a corollary, acquiescence in at least the partial mobilisation of the Russian army. If this mobilisation was not carried out it would be asking Russia to stand by unarmed and passive while Serbia was occupied by Austrian troops, without any security as to the extent of this occupation. This could not be done. We have, however, already seen that in the offer of the German Government this corollary was not accepted, and while they were, in effect, advising Austria to accept no mediation, to enter into no definite and formal negotiations with Russia, to put no limit on their operations against Serbia, they were threatening Russia with war if she mobilised a single man. For this was on the same day as Count Pourtalès' threats to M. Sazonof, and the menace of the Emperor's telegrams.

Could anything be more unreasonable? Could anything in effect be more disingenuous? Can we imagine any course better adapted to encourage Russian distrust and to force her to press on with her mobilisation with the greatest rapidity?

And this is offered as evidence of the sincere endeavour of Germany to keep the peace. This is what the promises in the Emperor's telegrams come to.

There was certainly in this nothing to justify the optimistic language used by Prince Lichnowsky.

The German Ambassador has been instructed by the German Chancellor to inform me that he is endeavouring to mediate between Vienna and St. Petersburg, and he hopes with good success. Austria and Russia seem to be in constant touch, and he is endeavouring to make Vienna explain in a satisfactory form at St. Petersburg the scope and extension of Austrian proceedings in Serbia. I told the German Ambassador that an agreement arrived at direct between Austria and Russia would be the best possible solution. I would press no proposal as long as there was a prospect of that, but my information this morning was that the Austrian Government have declined the suggestion of the Russian Government that the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg should be authorised to discuss directly with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs the means of settling the Austro-Serbian conflict.¹

Sir E. Grey,
July 29.

We may now turn to the record of these negotiations as contained in the Austrian Red Book.

¹ E. 84.

On Wednesday, as we have seen, probably at about the same time as this conversation took place, Count Szápáry had, in fact, gone to see M. Sazonof, and had made an explanation of the kind here suggested. We learn from him that he did this owing to a suggestion made by Count Pourtalès. This is interesting; it makes it probable that it was from Count Pourtalès that the idea of these renewed conversations originated, just as he had brought the two together on Sunday. He had all through believed and advised his Government that Russia would not go to war on behalf of Serbia; on Wednesday, as we have seen, he had, owing to Russian mobilisation, begun to realise that he was wrong; this would naturally create great anxiety in his mind, and he probably desired to use every effort to induce the Russian Government to keep quiet, partly in order to justify the advice which he had given.

Count Szápáry's step had been taken without instructions from Vienna, and, though it might be useful as showing a general friendly feeling, could not have any serious effect on the situation. The account of the conversation given above shows that in reality nothing was offered, as the Austrians still refused to recognise that Russia had interests in Serbia. The next day, however, we have direct information from Vienna. Two telegrams were sent by Count Berchtold to Count Szápáry.

I am of course still ready to explain to M. Sazonof, through Your Excellency, the various points contained in our Note addressed to Serbia, which, however, has already been outstripped by recent events. I should also attach special importance in accordance with the suggestion made to me through M. Schebeko also to discussing on this occasion, in a confidential and friendly manner, the questions which affect directly our relations towards Russia. From this it might be hoped that it would be possible to remove the ambiguities which have arisen, and to secure the development in a friendly manner of our relations towards our neighbours, which is so desirable an object.¹

Count Berchtold,
July 30.

The second gives an account of a conversation with M. Schebeko.

¹ A. 49. This was, it will be noticed, sent on Thursday, not as the German White Book says, on Wednesday. The date is important; it is after the Russian mobilisation had been publicly announced.

I have to-day explained to M. Schebeko that I have been informed that M. Sazonof has been hurt by my flat refusal of his proposal as to a discussion with Your Excellency, and that he is not less hurt that no exchange of ideas has taken place between myself and M. Schebeko.

Count Berchtold,
July 30.

With reference to the first point, I had already permitted your Excellency by telegram to give M. Sazonof any explanations he desired with regard to the Note—which in any case appears to be outstripped by the outbreak of war. In any case this could only take the form of subsequent explanations, as it was never our intention to depart in any way from the points contained in the Note. I had also authorised your Excellency to discuss in a friendly manner with M. Sazonof our special relations towards Russia.

That M. Sazonof should complain that no exchange of ideas had taken place between M. Schebeko and myself, must rest on a misunderstanding, as M. Schebeko and myself had discussed the practical questions two days before, a fact which the Ambassador confirmed with the observation that he had fully informed M. Sazonof of this conversation.

M. Schebeko then explained why our action against Serbia was regarded with such anxiety in St. Petersburg. He said that we were a Great Power which was proceeding against the small Serbian State, and it was not known at St. Petersburg what our intentions in the matter were, whether we desired to encroach on its sovereignty, whether we desired completely to overthrow it, or even crush it to the ground. Russia could not be indifferent towards the future fate of Serbia, which was linked with Russia through historical and other bonds. In St. Petersburg they had taken the trouble to use all their influence at Belgrade to induce them to accept all our conditions, though this was indeed at a time when the conditions afterwards imposed by us could not yet be known. But even with reference to these demands they would do everything they could in order to accomplish at least what was possible.

I reminded the Ambassador that we had repeatedly emphasised the fact that we did not desire to follow any policy of conquest in Serbia, also that we would not infringe its sovereignty, but we only desired to establish a condition of affairs which would offer us a guarantee against being disturbed by Serbia. To this I added a somewhat lengthy discussion of our intolerable relations towards Serbia. I also gave M. Schebeko clearly to understand to how large an extent Russian diplomacy was responsible for these circumstances, even if this were against the will of the ruling factors.

In the further course of our discussion I referred to the Russian mobilisation which had then come to my knowledge. Since this

was limited to the military districts of Odessa, Kieff, Moscow, and Kasan, it had an appearance of hostility against the Monarchy. I did not know what the grounds for this might be, as there was no dispute between us and Russia. Austria-Hungary had mobilised exclusively against Serbia; against Russia not a single man, and this would be observed from the single fact that the first, tenth, and eleventh corps had not been mobilised. In view, however, of the circumstance that Russia was openly mobilising against us, we should have to extend our mobilisation too, and in this case I desired to mention expressly that this measure did not, of course, bear any attitude of hostility towards Russia, and that it was exclusively a necessary countermeasure against the Russian mobilisation.

I asked M. Schebeko to announce this to his Government, and this he promised to do.¹

The telegrams, we may take it, though it is not mentioned, were the result of the advice given from Berlin, and they are exactly in accordance with the suggestions there made. All this is very courteous and reasonable in tone, like all Count Berchtold's despatches. But while they show a willingness to discuss in a friendly manner the relations to Russia, the real point in dispute is ignored or obscured. "There was no dispute between us and Russia." It was no good saying this; there was a dispute which had been quite clearly explained; it turned on the question whether Russia could view with indifference the invasion of Serbia. Friendly as the tone is, it is in substance all very vague. There is no suggestion of any specific engagement either as to the extent of the proposed military measures or the terms that would be required from Serbia after the victory. They might influence the general attitude of Russia, but there was nothing that could justify her in discontinuing mobilisation; the utmost that could come from this was that she should observe a waiting attitude while preparing to intervene if and when it became necessary.

On the other hand, the treatment of the mobilisation question is very calm, and quite reasonable. If Russia mobilises, Austria will extend her mobilisation, but this statement is not made in such a way as to convey a threat.

We get, in fact, the impression which is confirmed throughout by the Austrian account of these events that Austria and Russia

¹ A. 50.

were moving on the same plane; both armies had begun to mobilise and were prepared, if necessary, to extend and complete their mobilisation, but they intended at the same time to continue negotiations, and they seemed to have genuinely believed that notwithstanding the military preparations the discussions might be brought to a satisfactory issue. How different is this from the German attitude! With them "mobilisation means war."

These conversations play a large part in the correspondence of the other countries, and there seems to have been, indeed, some exaggeration as to their importance. We have, for instance, a very interesting account from the French Ambassador at Vienna.

In spite of the communication made yesterday by the Russian Ambassador to several of his colleagues, among them the German Ambassador, with reference to the partial mobilisation in his country, the Vienna press refrained from publishing the news. This enforced silence has just been explained at an interview of great importance between M. Schebeko and Count Berchtold, who examined at length the present formidable difficulties with equal readiness to apply to them mutually acceptable solutions.

M. Schebeko explained that the only object of the military preparations on the Russian side was to reply to those made by Austria, and to indicate the intention and the right of the Czar to formulate his views on the settlement of the Serbian question. The steps towards mobilisation taken in Galicia, answered Count Berchtold, have no aggressive intention and are only directed towards maintaining the situation as it stands. On both sides endeavours will be made to prevent these measures from being interpreted as signs of hostility.

With a view to settling the Austro-Serbian dispute it was agreed that *pourparlers* should be resumed at St. Petersburg between M. Sazonof and Count Szápáry; they had only been interrupted owing to a misunderstanding, as Count Berchtold thought that the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs claimed that the Austrian representative should be given powers which would allow him to modify the terms of the Austrian ultimatum.¹ Count Szápáry will only be authorised to discuss what settlement would be compatible with the dignity and prestige for which both Empires had equal concern.

It would therefore for the moment be in this direct form, and only between the two most interested Powers, that the discussion

¹ There was no misunderstanding; this is what M. Sazonof had asked for.

which Sir Edward Grey proposed to entrust to the four Powers not directly interested would take place.

Sir M. de Bunsen, who was with me, at once declared to M. Schebeko that the Foreign Office would entirely approve of this new procedure. Repeating the statement he made at the Ballplatz, the Russian Ambassador stated that his Government would take a much broader view than was generally supposed of the demands of the Monarchy; M. Schebeko did everything to convince Count Berchtold of the sincerity of Russia's desire to arrive at an agreement which would be acceptable to the two Empires.

The interview was carried on in a friendly tone and gave reason for thinking that all chances of localising the dispute were not lost, when the news of the German mobilisation arrived at Vienna.¹

The hopes founded on these conversations were, however, to be falsified; not only do we find when we get to the original Austrian documents that they contained much less than seems to have been supposed, but as a matter of fact nothing was done. The whole of Thursday seems to have passed without any fresh interview between M. Sazonof and Count Szápáry, and so far as our information goes they did not meet again till late on Friday night. The result was that M. Sazonof was left with no direct information later than that which he could derive from the discussion on Wednesday afternoon. There was, therefore, nothing in this development which could in the least take off the effect either of the German threats or of the Austrian operations against Serbia, and he had to make the decision to which he came on Thursday night on this alone.

Meanwhile the intelligence from Serbia was very bad. The bombardment of Belgrade, which had been begun immediately on the declaration of war on Tuesday, was being continued with some energy, and there was also news that at three other points on the frontier the Austrians continued their advance, though they had been met with stubborn resistance on the part of the Serbian troops, and both sides suffered slight losses. On another point there was a fierce encounter where a detachment of several hundred Serbians succeeded in holding a fort till nightfall. All this seemed to point to the fact that the

¹ F. 104. *I.e.* the false news of Thursday morning, which was at once contradicted.

Austrians were intending to press their attack upon Serbia with vigour, invade the territory of the kingdom, and push forward in a manner which must soon bring about a contact with the Serbian army. If this continued the crushing of Serbia would be an accomplished fact. M. Paléologue telegraphs, "The news of the bombardment of Belgrade during the night and morning of yesterday has provoked very strong feelings in Russia." This was not the way in which to bring Russia to accept the German requirement that the army should be demobilised. And this news would arrive just about the same time as the Emperor's telegram with its insistence on this. It was perfectly clear that under the protection of Germany Austria was proposing to continue the attack on Serbia. This is, in fact, quite clearly expressed by the telegram from Vienna to Berlin quoted above.

What was to be done? It might well be said that the situation was a hopeless one. The Belgian Minister tells us that on this day the war party got the upper hand. He attributes this to the confidence that they would have the help of Great Britain. No doubt some rumours of the refusal to promise neutrality had now reached St. Petersburg, and the belief that if the worst came to the worst Russia would have the help not only of France but also of England was growing stronger. But this was not the decisive element. Russia had, indeed, no alternative; the acceptance of the German conditions was not a matter on which there could be any consideration. There was nothing left except to wait and see whether the answer to the last proposal made to Count Pourtalès would bring any concession. If not, things must go their way. The Czar indeed answered the Emperor's telegram, but the answer (which was sent at 1.20 p.m.) is really a warning that fuller mobilisation is impending.

I thank you from my heart for your quick reply. I am sending to-night Tatisheff [Russian honorary Aide to the Kaiser] with instructions. The military measures now taking form were decided upon five days ago, and for the reason of defence against the preparations of Austria. I hope with all my heart that these measures will not influence in any manner your position as mediator which I appraise very highly. We need your strong pressure upon Austria so that an understanding can be arrived at with us.¹

¹ We hear nothing more of this mission to the Emperor.

Again, it will be noted that, as in the first telegram, he asked the German Emperor to use pressure upon Austria.

Some time in the evening came the answer to the offer made during the previous night. It was a blank refusal, and no reason was given for the refusal. The German Government had not even taken the trouble of consulting their ally.

I have received your telegram of 16th (29th) July, and have communicated the text of your proposal to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, whom I have just seen. He told me that he had received an identic telegram from the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and he then declared that he considered it impossible for Austria to accept our proposal.¹

M. Swerbéef,
July 30.

My Russian colleague has just told me that Herr von Jagow (to whom Count Pourtalès had communicated the conciliatory formula suggested by M. Sazonof for an Austro-Russian understanding) had just told him that he found this proposal unacceptable to Austria, thus showing the negative action of German diplomacy at Vienna.²

M. Jules Cambon,
July 30.

Let us recall the circumstances in which this proposal had been made. Germany at first presented a veiled ultimatum; the Ambassador had then modified this, asking for the conditions on which Russia would consent to stop her mobilisation. M. Sazonof had then formulated this last proposal. We must recollect also that it had been drawn up in great haste at two o'clock in the morning. As the Russian Ambassador at London says :

After the declaration made by the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg regarding German mobilisation, those relations [with Germany] had changed and he had returned the only reply to the request which was possible for a Great Power. When the German Ambassador again visited you and inquired what your conditions were, you had formulated them in altogether special circumstances.³

Count
Benckendorff,
July 30.

¹ R. 63. The date is wrong; the telegram to which this is an answer had been sent off about 2 a.m. and is dated July 30th, but such mistakes often occur in telegrams sent late at night.

² F. 107.

³ R. 64.

Now that this had been categorically refused without explanation, the situation naturally returned to that in which matters were before this last proposal was made; that is, Russia was confronted by the suggestion that Germany considered her mobilisation against Austria as a threat to Germany itself. This point of view had since then been confirmed in a telegram from the Emperor, and there was no doubt that Germany was on the eve of mobilisation.

Russia could not withdraw her mobilisation against Austria; on the contrary, in view of the Austrian attack upon Serbia which was hourly progressing, and the absence of any definite proposals for settlement from Austria, it must be pressed forward. If, however, she continued in the state of partial mobilisation, she would clearly be exposing herself to most serious danger, for at any moment she might anticipate an ultimatum from Germany, which must bring about war. If war ensued, Germany would at once attack France; and if Russia was not prepared, France would be exposed to a crushing blow. She had, therefore, no alternative except at once to continue her military preparations and extend the mobilisation to the whole army.

It was during the night of July 30th-31st that the decision was made, and the order was issued very early the following morning.¹

The Russian correspondence gives no definite information as to the date and hour; the German White Book says it was issued during the morning of the 31st of July.²

Almost at the same time the complete mobilisation of the Austrian army was ordered.

There is some doubt as to whether the order for Russian mobilisation followed or preceded that for Austrian mobilisation, the imminence of which had already been referred to. Sir George Buchanan, in announcing that of Russia, does not

¹ Mr. Price (p. 103) gives an interesting proof of this; he quotes a letter of Mr. Stephen Graham in *The Times* to the effect that the telegram ordering mobilisation reached the Siberian village in which he was staying at four o'clock in the morning of the 31st. Allowing for the difference of time, this would probably mean that it was sent out in the early hours of the morning.

² The English translation, published by the German Government, says the *afternoon*, but this is obviously merely a slip.

specifically mention complete Austrian mobilisation, only the movement of troops.

It has been decided to issue orders for general mobilisation. This decision was taken in consequence of report received from Russian Ambassador in Vienna to the effect that
Sir G. Buchanan, Austria is determined not to yield to intervention of
July 31. Powers, and that she is moving troops against Russia as well as against Serbia.

Russia has also reason to believe that Germany is making active military preparations, and she cannot afford to let her get a start.¹

On the other hand, the Russian Government in their final statement say :

Germany considered this Russian proposal unacceptable to Austria-Hungary. At that very moment news of the proclamation of general mobilisation by Austria-Hungary
M. Sazonof, reached St. Petersburg.
August 2.

All this time hostilities were continuing on Serbian territory, and Belgrade was bombarded afresh.

The failure of our proposals for peace compelled us to extend the scope of our precautionary military measures.

The Berlin Cabinet questioned us on this, and we replied that Russia was compelled to begin preparations so as to be ready for every emergency.²

And the French Ambassador says :

As a result of the general mobilisation of Austria and of the measures for mobilisation taken secretly, but continuously, by Germany for the last six days, the order for the
M. Paléologue, general mobilisation of the Russian army has been
July 31. given, Russia not being able, without most serious danger, to allow herself to be further out-distanced ; really she is only taking military measures corresponding to those taken by Germany.

For imperative reasons of strategy the Russian Government, knowing that Germany was arming, could no longer delay the conversion of her partial mobilisation into a general mobilisation.³

And this view is taken in all French documents,⁴ and by Sir Maurice de Bunsen in his final despatch :

¹ E. 113.

² R. 77.

³ F. 118.

⁴ E. 126, and F. 127.

The inevitable consequence ensued. Russia replied to a partial Austrian mobilisation and declaration of war against Serbia by a partial Russian mobilisation against Austria. Sir M. de Bunsen, September 1. Austria met this move by completing her own mobilisation, and Russia again responded with results which have passed into history.¹

It appears from French sources that general mobilisation on the part of Austria was declared at one o'clock in the morning of July 31st:

General mobilisation for all men from 19 to 42⁴⁵ years of age was declared by the Austro-Hungarian Government this morning at one o'clock (*à la première heure*).²
 M. Dumaine, July 31. My Russian colleague still thinks that this step is not entirely in contradiction to the declaration made yesterday by Count Berchtold.³

It was, as a matter of fact, announced in the Viennese papers of Friday. The mobilisation of Austria and Russia must have been almost simultaneous.

No action had been the subject of such severe criticism as that of the Russians in calling in the reserves throughout their whole Empire. The Germans have fixed on this as the sole real cause of the war, and have built up a theory that at this

¹ E. 161. Sir Maurice de Bunsen announces the Austrian mobilisation in a despatch dated August 1st:

General mobilisation of army and fleet. (E. 127.)

It has been argued from this that Austria did not mobilise until Friday. There seems, however, no doubt that as a matter of fact the order for mobilisation was sent out on the Thursday, and the fact that Sir M. de Bunsen did not announce it till rather late cannot outweigh the other evidence.

² The comment on this in the memorandum of December 21st ignores the statement that Austria mobilised at 1 a.m. (*à la première heure*). The memorandum says, "Austria-Hungary did not mobilise till July 31st; Russia, on the other hand, in the night of July 30th and the 31st." As a matter of fact, as we have seen, both States extended or completed their mobilisation during the night of the 30th to the 31st; it would have been easy to contradict the statement as to the hour if this was incorrect; instead of doing so, they ignore it and make it appear that Austria did not mobilise till long after Russia, although, as a matter of fact, both States did so practically at the same time.

³ F. 115.

moment proposals of a nature satisfactory to all were on the point of being put forward, and that it was Russian mobilisation alone which prevented them being brought to a satisfactory conclusion.¹ This position we shall examine in the next chapter; here it is sufficient to point out that, at the time the Russian Government determined on this step, no practical suggestion of any kind whatever had been made or brought to the notice of the Russian Government by either Germany or Austria, and every proposal that they themselves made had been curtly refused. It is indeed true that on this day the Austrians had begun fresh "conversations," but they had done so on the express condition that these conversations should be about everything or nothing—only not about the one thing which mattered—Serbia, and as they started these conversations they continued to bombard Belgrade.

To a certain extent the Russian Government themselves are responsible for the criticisms of their action, for they have not put forward either at the time or later any full and well-considered statement of the reasons which brought it about. Let us therefore put ourselves in the position of the Russian Government, and then we shall find a full and ample explanation and justification.

There is, I think, no suggestion made by any one that there was any desire or intention on the part of Russia for a war during 1914. They did not intend war themselves, nor did they anticipate attack from any one else. The murder of the Archduke

¹ The criticism of Dr. Helfferich is instructive :

"All the pretexts advanced by the Russian Government for their general mobilisation are untenable. Neither Austro-Hungarian nor German military measures can justify the Russian general mobilisation. The Russian Government issued orders for general mobilisation immediately after Austria-Hungary had, upon the German Emperor's serious advice, adopted an attitude of quiet expectation, of which she had informed the Russian Ambassador at Vienna. Thus, Russia has conjured up the war just when hopes of a preservation of peace were revived by Austria-Hungary's conciliatory step."

Austria-Hungary had adopted an "attitude of quiet expectation"; it is an admirable phrase—if only it were true. We must not forget that the "quiet expectation" of Austria included the rapid development of military operations against Serbia, general mobilisation, and also a threat of war against Russia by Germany if she made the slightest military preparations.

aroused anxiety, but the anxiety at first was not very serious. They were genuinely and honestly taken by surprise by both the form and contents of the Austrian Note ; as we have seen, it aroused immediately and spontaneously the most intense national feeling and indignation. It at once stirred up throughout the whole Russian nation feelings of sympathy for a kindred race. The Government shared this feeling, and they also looked on it as a carefully premeditated attack on their position in the Balkans ; as we now know from the official statements of the German Government, they were right in doing so. From the very first there was therefore a complete unanimity in the whole nation and in all circles, that if the policy outlined in the Note was carried through, Russia must oppose it even by war.

It is commonly said, and it is probably true, that there was from the beginning what is called a war party ; that is, that among the Ministers and at court there were some who from the first believed that war must ensue, and wished Russia immediately to decree general mobilisation, or possibly to present a formal Note to Austria stating that any attack on Serbia would be regarded as a declaration of war against Russia. The Czar and M. Sazonof, who throughout acted with great prudence but with complete honesty, were strong enough to keep control of the situation ; they refused to adopt this policy ; they limited themselves to preparatory and precautionary measures so as to allow time to see if a peaceful agreement could not be made. They did all they could themselves to bring about an amicable solution. It was in vain. Every proposal was rejected and every suggestion was met by a rebuff. At the same time there was ample evidence that Germany was trying to intimidate them into surrender ; she did so first by approaching France and trying to break up the alliance, secondly by direct threats that if Russia took any measures of precaution she would immediately go to war. The German Emperor intervened ; but his telegrams were in form so patronising as to be an insult, and in substance only confirmed the view that Germany wished to put before Russia the alternative of war or submission.

Up to Wednesday afternoon they kept complete control of the situation. M. Sazonof handled it with great skill. He never

wavered, he never showed the slightest desire to give way, he kept the German Government informed of the precautionary measures which were being taken, but he avoided everything that could be in any way provocative. Even when partial mobilisation had become inevitable owing to the declaration of war on Serbia, he postponed the issue of the order calling out the reserves until more than a day after it had been communicated to the German Government and after war had actually begun.

The events of Wednesday afternoon and evening clearly removed the last real hopes of peace. War with Serbia had begun, and the German Government, both through Count Pourtalès and through the Emperor, had told them that even partial mobilisation against Austria must bring war. The Emperor spoke of the renewal of conversations with Austria as giving a prospect of peace; when these conversations were renewed it was found that they were conversations and nothing more; they held out no prospect of any desire to meet Russian wishes, and just at that time came the news of the renewed bombardment of Belgrade.

Is it to be wondered that at last the Czar was unable any longer to resist the pressure which had been brought to bear upon him, the pressure of which he had spoken quite openly to the Emperor? It was shown that those who hoped for peace were wrong; they were in truth confronted by a determined and remorseless effort to humiliate them; there was to be no mercy for Serbia and no regard for Russia. Then it was, and not till then, that full mobilisation was ordered. What Government would have acted differently? Perhaps the English Cabinet might have delayed for a few hours longer; we shall have to show in the second part of this work that in a similar situation they did delay, but the delay was fruitless. Before the determination of the German Government peace could not be kept except at the price of complete submission to their requirements. How would the German Government themselves have acted in similar circumstances? They would have mobilised and declared war. The Russians mobilised and continued negotiations.

Had the Russian Government taken a different line, had they

openly and at once made Austria's attack on Serbia a *casus belli*, could any one have taken exception to this? They would have had ample justification for so doing. What they actually did was less than this, for they always left open a possibility for an arrangement.

It is interesting to compare the Russian action with that of Germany a day later. The quarrel of Russia was technically with Austria alone; Germany came in only as an ally of Austria. Germany in the same way was confronted by the two allies, Russia and France. Now the complaint is made that Russia mobilised eventually, not only against Austria but against Germany as well. How did Germany herself act in a similar situation? Did she, when confronted by the danger of war with Russia, act as Russia had done and at first mobilise on one side only? Of course not. She immediately mobilised the whole of her forces, and though France had throughout shown the greatest restraint and had carefully avoided every word or action which could have been interpreted in a provocative sense, Germany immediately massed her troops on the French frontier and addressed an ultimatum to her. In the light of this, what hypocrisy is it on the part of the German Government to complain of the Russian action!

It has been suggested that the cardinal factor on Thursday was the knowledge that Russia would have the support of France and of England, that she on this day received assurances to this effect, and that it was this which was the decisive element. As to France, there was not and never had been any doubt as to the course she would take. Naturally Russia would anyhow have desired to wait till the President had got home; but apart from this the action of France had no influence upon her decision. As to Great Britain, of course the action she would take was the constant theme of discussion throughout Europe. Russia no doubt confidently hoped for her support and to some extent speculated on it. There was a conviction that England would eventually have to come in, and this grew stronger as the days went by. This was all. The Russian Government were in possession of no assurance or information beyond that which had been published; the British Government did not themselves know what they were going to do; the French had no assurance

from them ; as we shall see later their whole action was most uncertain for several days later. There is no possible doubt that even if they had been certain that they would not have British support Russia would have stood out. The insults and the attack were too grave to be passed over ; it was not a case of wanting war ; it was a case in which they were driven into war ; they did not challenge Germany, they took up the challenge which had been offered them.

CHAPTER X

MEDIATION RENEWED

WE left off the account of the negotiations for mediation on Wednesday, the 29th. They had, however, been continuing, and now with apparently renewed success, side by side with the discussion as to mobilisation which occupied the days Wednesday till midday on Friday, and it will be convenient to resume the account of them.

It is not easy to do so. The negotiations that occupied the two days from Wednesday till Friday are the most obscure part of the whole story. The obscurity arises, however, not from the nature of the negotiations themselves; these were, of course, rather involved. Proposal after proposal for mediation, accommodation, or settlement followed one another, and the answer to one suggestion had not been given before the next suggestion followed. This, however, is not the real cause of the difficulty; that arises from the nature of the publications made by the German Government. While they repeatedly state in a general way that they used pressure to induce Austria to come to some arrangement with Russia, and were themselves working hard for peace, they have completely omitted to publish any kind of evidence of these statements. The key to the whole history depends on the communications which passed between Vienna and Berlin, and as to these we remain almost completely in the dark. We have from England a complete account of all proposals, and so far as England goes there is no difficulty or uncertainty of any kind as to what happened. The French Government did not take any prominent part in these negotiations, though they loyally supported the efforts of Great Britain. From the reports both of the French Government itself and from the French Ambassadors at Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg we gain a great deal of information, but this is all necessarily second-hand. It is a report as to what

they had been told or had heard that the German Government or the Austrian Government had done. The despatches published by the Russian Government, though they leave considerable gaps, are sufficient to show the essential points so far as they influence their action. The Austrian Red Book adds considerably to the knowledge we previously had, but it breaks down in an unaccountable way just at the critical moment, and, as will appear later, suddenly becomes completely silent just at the moment when the success or failure of the negotiations was at stake. This silence is of supreme importance. When this book was announced we had looked to it for corroborative evidence as to the reasons given by the German Government for the collapse of the negotiations. This corroborative evidence is completely wanting, and leaves the strong presumption that the German statement is untrue.

These negotiations are conducted in circumstances essentially different from those at the beginning of the week. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday the negotiations hold the field. With the declaration of war, the beginning of operations, and Russian mobilisation, this is changed, and this introduces a great change into the character of the negotiations themselves; the centre of gravity is different. It is no longer enough to propose conversations or negotiations or terms of discussion; this might eventually be useful. The important thing at the moment is always: can the operations against Serbia be suspended; can the sphere of occupation be limited? If not, can Russia be persuaded to postpone mobilisation?

What was wanted throughout was time, but time was not allowed, for always there was the actual beginning of the attack, the bombardment of Belgrade, the widespread movement of Austrian troops being concentrated along the Serbian frontier. This was the goad that drove on the Russians, for the war fever spread from Vienna to St. Petersburg, and always there was the menacing voice from Berlin that every precaution in Russia would be answered by mobilisation in Germany.

I

On July 30th, there appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt* an article by a well-known journalist.

The question must be raised whether there is no means to banish the danger of this most serious hour, and if it would not be the word of liberation, and would not be accepted by the whole of Europe as such, if the declaration were publicly made, not in the secrecy of the Cabinets, that the warlike enterprise of Austria-Hungary on Serbia must have its local limitations; that for the present, until a diplomatic decision has been made on the further development of the Serbian problem, they should confine themselves to the occupation of definite strategical points, and that it should take the character of a punitive expedition. Europe is waiting for the prince or statesman who, after an understanding with Austria, should step between the nations who are in danger with a practical proposal.

Though he did not know it, this suggestion, an obvious one indeed, was at that very moment being made by Sir Edward Grey, who then, as always, made himself the spokesman of the obvious and reasonable course, the adoption of which held out good hopes that war might be averted. The suggestion came from him, and, as always, the assent to it was refused by both Austria and Germany.

I told the German Ambassador this afternoon of the information that I had received, that Russia had informed Germany respecting her mobilisation. I also told him of the communication made by Count Benckendorff, that the Austrian declaration of war manifestly rendered vain any direct conversations between Russia and Austria. I said that the hope built upon these direct conversations by the German Government yesterday had disappeared to-day. To-day the German Chancellor was working in the interests of mediation in Vienna and St. Petersburg. If he succeeded, well and good. If not, it was more important than ever that Germany should take up what I had suggested to the German Ambassador this morning,¹ and propose some method by which the four Powers should be able to work together to keep the peace of Europe. I pointed out, however, that the Russian Government, while desirous of mediation, regarded it as a condition that the military operations against Serbia should be suspended, as otherwise mediation would only drag on matters, and give Austria time to crush Serbia. It was, of course, too late for all military operations against Serbia to be suspended. In a short time, I supposed, the Austrian forces would be in Belgrade, and in occupation of some Serbian territory. But even then it might be possible to bring some mediation into existence, if Austria, while saying

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 29.

¹ E. 84. See above, p. 128.

that she must hold the occupied territory until she had complete satisfaction from Serbia, stated that she would not advance further, pending an effort of the Powers to mediate between her and Russia.¹

Here we have introduced the important points : (1) that Austria should agree not to press her advance into Serbia beyond a certain point ; (2) that Russia should agree to the consideration of proposals issued from Serbian territory.

This suggestion it will be seen meets the special danger arising from the military situation ; it would afford a reason for Russia suspending mobilisation and Austria suspending military operations.

The King of England, in his answer to the telegram received from Prince Henry, next day referred to this proposal of Sir Edward Grey's and pressed the Emperor to give his support to it.

Thanks for your telegram. Am very glad to hear of William's endeavours to unite with Nicholas for the maintenance of peace.

King George,
July 30. It is my earnest wish that such an irreparable misfortune as a European War may be avoided. My

Government is doing its utmost to suggest to Russia and France that they should postpone further military preparations on the condition that Austria declares herself satisfied with the occupation of Belgrade and the neighbouring Serbian territory as pledge for a satisfactory regulation of her terms while other countries should at the same time suspend their military preparations. I am confident that William will use his great influence in order to move Austria to the acceptance of this proposal ; by this he will show that Germany and England are working together to prevent what would be an international catastrophe. Please assure William that I am doing everything and will continue to do what is in my power to obtain European peace.

The same day, that is on Thursday, Prince Lichnowsky told Sir Edward Grey that the German Government were taking up this idea.

German Ambassador informs me that German Government would endeavour to influence Austria, after taking Belgrade and

Serbian territory in region of frontier, to promise
Sir E. Grey,
July 30. not to advance further, while Powers endeavoured to arrange that Serbia should give satisfaction sufficient to pacify Austria. Territory occupied would of course

¹ E. 88.

be evacuated when Austria was satisfied. I suggested this yesterday as a possible relief to the situation, and, if it can be obtained, I would earnestly hope that it might be agreed to suspend further military preparations on all sides.¹

This is confirmed by a telegram from Berlin, which shows that Herr von Jagow seemed to agree that this was a feasible plan.

Secretary of State informs me that immediately on receipt of Prince Lichnowsky's telegram recording his last conversation with you he asked Austro-Hungarian Government whether they would be willing to accept mediation on basis of occupation by Austrian troops of Belgrade or some other point and issue their conditions from here. He has up till now received no reply, but he fears Russian mobilisation against Austria will have increased difficulties, as Austria-Hungary, who has as yet only mobilised against Serbia, will probably find it necessary also against Russia. Secretary of State says if you can succeed in getting Russia to agree to above basis for an arrangement and in persuading her in the meantime to take no steps which might be regarded as an act of aggression against Austria he still sees some chance that European peace may be preserved.²

Sir E. Goschen,
July 30.

This is confirmed by the White Book, in which it is stated : "We even as late as the 30th of July forwarded to Vienna as basis for negotiations, the English proposal that Austria-Hungary should dictate her conditions to Serbia, that is after her march into Serbia. We must assume that Russia would accept this basis."

It will be observed that in this account the idea takes a form rather different from that given to it in conversation between Sir Edward Grey and Prince Lichnowsky ; while accepting that part which contains a concession by Russia that Austria-Hungary shall be allowed to dictate her conditions from Serbian territory they omit any reference to the special condition that Austria shall put a limit to her advances. This omission is of great importance. It was quite conceivable that Russia should maintain her waiting attitude, allow Austria to occupy some portions of Serbia, and wait to see what conditions she would then require, but she obviously could not do this unless she knew before how far the Austrian occupation might go, for otherwise she might be giving her assent to the occupation of the whole of Serbia, which would

¹ E. 103.

² E. 98.

entail the crushing of the Serbian army. It is one of the most serious faults in the White Book that the various proposals are never printed in the authentic form in which they were made.

We learn from Austria that this was, in fact, communicated to Vienna—communicated, but apparently not recommended.

Herr von Tschirschky has in accordance with his instructions yesterday communicated a discussion between Sir E. Grey and Prince Lichnowsky in which the English Secretary of State made the following announcement to the German Ambassador :

Count Berchtold,
July 31.

“ Sazonof has informed the English Government that after the declaration of war by Austria-Hungary against Serbia, he is no longer in a position to deal directly with Austria-Hungary, and he therefore requests that England will again take up her work of mediation. The Russian Government regarded the preliminary stoppage of hostilities as a condition precedent to this.”

To this Russian declaration, Sir E. Grey remarked to Prince Lichnowsky that England thought of a mediation *à quatre*, and that it regarded this as urgently necessary if a general war was to be prevented.¹

This is not a quite faithful record of the offer ; it has been altered in passing from London to Berlin, and from Berlin to Vienna. M. Sazonof had not said that “ he was no longer in a position to deal directly with Austria-Hungary,” but that “ the Austrian declaration of war clearly puts an end to the idea of direct communications between Austria and Russia,” and, as we have seen above, the refusal to continue conversations did not, as a matter of fact, come from Russia, but from Austria. M. Sazonof, in his original telegram, was only putting on record an obvious fact ; the change makes it appear that he is expressing a refusal by Russia. Moreover, Sir E. Grey’s suggestion that the conditions might be issued from Belgrade is omitted ; this, however, was an essential part of his proposal, which would make it much more acceptable to Austria ; the German version was as if no occupation of Serbian territory was to be allowed. We have, in fact, two versions of Sir E. Grey’s proposal recorded by the German Government ; of these, one omits the first condition, that Austria should place a limit to her occupation of Serbia, the other omits the second condition, that Russia should agree to consider proposals issued from Belgrade.

¹ A. 51.

After the statement by Prince Lichnowsky Sir Edward Grey had forwarded the suggestion to St. Petersburg; he put it in the form of a proposal for a modification of their own formula (which had now been rejected), though it is in fact a completely new suggestion.

Russian Ambassador has told me of condition laid down by M. Sazonof, as quoted in your telegram of the 30th of July,¹ and fears it cannot be modified; but if Austrian advance were stopped after occupation of Belgrade, I think Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs' formula might be changed to read that the Powers would examine how Serbia could fully satisfy Austria without impairing Serbian sovereign rights or independence.

If Austria, having occupied Belgrade and neighbouring Serbian territory, declares herself ready, in the interest of European peace, to cease her advance and to discuss how a complete settlement can be arrived at, I hope that Russia would also consent to discussion and suspension of further military preparations, provided that other Powers did the same.

It is a slender chance of preserving peace, but the only one I can suggest if Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs can come to no agreement at Berlin. You should inform Minister for Foreign Affairs.²

The German official statement in the North German Gazette has a remark commenting on this suggestion of Sir Edward Grey's:

Interesting is the fact which we learn from the Yellow Book (see No. 113) that the English Government by their Ambassador tried to get M. Sazonof afterwards to alter his formula and make it even less acceptable for Austria-Hungary. He was to add to it the condition, which he had not previously put forward, that Austria should stop the march of her troops on Serbian territory. This fact shows that the British Government, which had in the meantime become more Russian than the Czar, desired to *make a compromise impossible under any circumstances.*

This was, of course, written at a later date, when the chief object was to show that the British Government was really responsible for the war. It is interesting as showing to what extremes of misrepresentation the Chancellor was willing to go in order to transfer the guilt to England. It was, of course, quite unneces-

¹ See E. 97.

² E. 103.

sary to go to the French Book and make it appear as if the English proposal appeared there for the first time. He knew all about it himself, and had done so throughout. The proposal had not been made till it had received the approval of the German Ambassador; Herr von Jagow had given Sir Edward Goschen to understand that he had recommended it to Austria, and it had been officially communicated to the Austrian Government by Germany. Nay more, the German Government tell us that they themselves had made proposals to Austria entirely on the lines suggested by Great Britain, that is, on the lines of this formula. What, then, is the object of making it appear that this formula was a new fact first published in the French Yellow Book?

And how absurd is the suggestion that this formula had been put forward by Sir Edward Grey in order to make the Russian formula even less acceptable for Austria-Hungary. When Sir Edward Grey proposed this, Germany had already refused the Russian formula: refused it without explanation and on the ground that it was not even worth while sending it to Austria for their opinion. On the other hand they forwarded the English formula and professed to regard it as one which might lead to satisfactory results; as indeed it might have done, for it really contains a great concession by Russia, as, instead of a discussion on the original demands, it embodies the conception that Russia would negotiate on terms to be sent by Austria after the occupation of Serbian territory.

The formula was communicated to the French Government, who supported it at St. Petersburg and elsewhere:

The British Ambassador has handed me a Note from his Government asking the French Government to support a proposal at St. Petersburg for the peaceful solution of the Austro-Serbian conflict.

M. René Viviani,
July 31.

This Note shows that the German Ambassador has informed Sir E. Grey of the intention of his Government to try to exercise influence on the Austro-Hungarian Government after the capture of Belgrade and the occupation of the districts bordering on the frontier, in order to obtain a promise not to advance further, while the Powers endeavoured to secure that Serbia should give sufficient satisfaction to Austria; the occupied territory would be evacuated as soon as she had received satisfaction.

Sir E. Grey made this suggestion on the 29th of July, and expressed the hope that military preparations would be suspended on all sides. Although the Russian Ambassador at London has informed the Secretary of State that he fears that the Russian condition ¹ cannot be modified, Sir E. Grey thinks that, if Austria stops her advance after the occupation of Belgrade, the Russian Government could agree to change their formula in the following way:

“That the Powers would examine how Serbia should give complete satisfaction to Austria without endangering the sovereignty or independence of the Kingdom. In case Austria after occupying Belgrade and the neighbouring Serbian territory should declare herself ready, in the interests of Europe, to stop her advance and to discuss how an arrangement might be arrived at, Russia could also consent to the discussion and suspend her military preparations, provided that the other Powers acted in the same way.”

Please inform M. Sazonof urgently that the suggestion of Sir E. Grey appears to me to furnish a useful basis for conversation between the Powers, who are equally desirous of working for an honourable arrangement of the Austro-Serbian conflict, and of averting in this manner the dangers which threaten general peace.

The plan proposed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, by stopping the advance of the Austrian army and by entrusting to the Powers the duty of examining how Serbia could give full satisfaction to Austria without endangering the sovereign rights and the independence of the Kingdom, by thus affording Russia a means of suspending all military preparations, while the other Powers are to act in the same way, is calculated equally to give satisfaction to Russia and to Austria and to provide for Serbia an acceptable means of issue from the present difficulty.

I would ask you carefully to be guided by the foregoing considerations in earnestly pressing M. Sazonof to give his adherence without delay to the proposal of Sir E. Grey, of which he will have been himself informed.²

During the course of Wednesday and Thursday this was then launched on its way. We hear nothing further on the 30th and on the morning of the 31st (Friday) it is clear that Sir Edward Grey was still without further information. During that day, however, the proposal was accepted by Russia.

¹ See despatch quoted on p. 232.

² F. 112. This telegram is dated July 31st, but it is probable that the action which it records took place on the previous day.

The British Ambassador, on the instructions of his Government, has informed me of the wish of the London Cabinet to make certain modifications in the formula which I suggested yesterday to the German Ambassador. I replied that I accepted the British suggestion. I accordingly send you the text of the modified formula, which is as follows :

"If Austria will agree to check the advance of her troops on Serbian territory; if, recognising that the dispute between Austria and Serbia has become a question of European interest, she will allow the Great Powers to look into the matter and decide what satisfaction Serbia could afford to the Austro-Hungarian Government without impairing her rights as a sovereign State or her independence, Russia will undertake to maintain her waiting attitude."¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs sent for me and French Ambassador and asked us to telegraph to our respective Governments subjoined formula as best calculated to amalgamate proposal made by you in your telegram of 30th July with formula recorded in my telegram of 30th July. He trusted it would meet with your approval. . . .

M. Sazonof said that undoubtedly there would be better prospect of a peaceful solution if the suggested conversation were to take place in London, where the atmosphere was far more favourable, and he therefore hoped that you would see your way to agreeing to this.

His Excellency ended by expressing his deep gratitude to His Majesty's Government, who had done so much to save the situation. It would be largely due to them if war were prevented. The Emperor, the Russian Government, and the Russian people would never forget the firm attitude adopted by Great Britain.²

The alteration made in Sir Edward Grey's formula is, of course, not unimportant. The expression "waiting attitude" requires elucidation. It is a point on which Austria and Germany might fairly have taken exception, and it would have been natural for them to ask for further explanation and assurances; the nature of these would have depended upon the limit that Austria agreed to place on her occupation of Serbia. If she would place no limit, then of course Russian military preparations could not be suspended. If she agreed to do so, then Great Britain and France would jointly have brought pressure

¹ R. 67. See also F. 113.

² E. 120.

to bear on Russia to suspend military preparations, and it would have had to be established that "waiting attitude" included this, and they were in a position to bring her to a concession on this point.

Sir Edward Grey had now in his hands the definite assent of Russia in such a form that he could have begun the work of mediation immediately.

The general situation at this time is summed up by M. René Viviani :

The efforts made up till now concurrently by England and Russia with the earnest support of France (obtained in advance for every peaceful effort) with the object of a direct understanding between Vienna and St. Petersburg, or of the mediation of the four Powers in the most appropriate form, are being united to-day ; Russia, giving a fresh proof of her desire for an understanding, has hastened to reply to the first appearance of an overture made by Germany since the beginning of the crisis (as to the conditions on which Russia would stop her military preparations) by indicating a formula, and then modifying it in accordance with the request of England ; there ought to be hope, therefore, negotiations having also begun again between the Russian and Austrian Ambassadors, that English mediation will complete at London that which is being attempted by direct negotiations at Vienna and St. Petersburg.¹

M. René Viviani,
July 31.

Sir Edward Grey's attitude on this is clearly shown in a telegram sent on Friday :

I learn from the German Ambassador that, as a result of suggestions by the German Government, a conversation has taken place at Vienna between the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Russian Ambassador. The Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg has also been instructed that he may converse with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and that he should give explanations about the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, and discuss suggestions and any questions directly affecting Austro-Russian relations. If the Russian Government object to the Austrians mobilising eight army corps, it might be pointed out that this is not too great a number against 400,000 Serbians.²

Sir E. Grey to
Sir G. Buchanan,
July 31.

¹ F. 114.

² This sentence is generally quoted as evidence that Sir E. Grey thought Russian mobilisation unnecessary. The words, however, do not represent what he said ; they are obviously part of the report of the Ambassador's words ; Sir E. Grey's comments came in at the end of the telegram. This he never said, and never could have said.

The German Ambassador asked me to urge the Russian Government to show goodwill in the discussions and to suspend their military preparations.

It is with great satisfaction that I have learnt that discussions are being resumed between Austria and Russia, and you should express this to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and tell him that I earnestly hope he will encourage them.

I informed the German Ambassador that, as regards military preparations, I did not see how Russia could be urged to suspend them unless some limit were put by Austria to the advance of her troops into Serbia.¹

One thing only remained—that was the consent of Austria to mediation. It was at last given, almost at the same time as that of Russia; though it did not accept the conditions accompanying it.

I ask Your Excellency to convey our warm thanks to the Secretary of State for the communications made to us through Herr von Tschirschky, and to declare to him that in spite of the change in the situation which has since arisen through the mobilisation of Russia, we are quite prepared to entertain the proposal of Sir E. Grey to negotiate between us and Serbia.

The conditions of our acceptance are, nevertheless, that our military action against Serbia should continue to take its course, and that the English Cabinet should move the Russian Government to bring to a standstill the Russian mobilisation which is directed against us, in which case, of course, we will also at once cancel the defensive military countermeasures in Galicia, which are occasioned by the Russian attitude.²

This was sent on Friday morning, apparently before the news of the complete Russian mobilisation had arrived, but after the extended mobilisation by Austria had been ordered.

It contains both an acceptance and a refusal. The acceptance is a great concession. For the first time since the issue of the Austrian Note we have here a definite statement by Austria that she will accept mediation between herself and Serbia. It is true that in sending this acceptance she refused the conditions on which mediation was offered, namely, a limitation of military action against Serbia, but notwithstanding this the change in her attitude was so great that it at once introduced a complete alteration in the whole situation. Had Sir Edward Grey

¹ E. 110.

² A. 51.

received this answer he would have had the strings in his hand ; he would have had both from Russia and from Austria an acceptance of the principle of mediation conducted from London. With this he could at once have gone to work, and he would have been in a position in a formal and authoritative manner to lay down to the two Powers the conditions on which he would continue the mediation. He could have said to Austria : " The mediation can only continue on one of two conditions : either you suspend your operations against Serbia, and as a consequence of this Russia suspends her mobilisation ; or, if you continue your operations against Serbia, Russia must be allowed to continue her mobilisation." If these conditions had been refused either by Russia or by Austria, then the blame for the rupture of negotiations could have been clearly assigned to the right party. As a matter of fact it would have been morally impossible for some agreement not to have been made on this point.

Sir Edward Grey never received this answer from Austria. It was sent from Vienna to Berlin, but was never forwarded from Berlin to London. The fact that it had been sent was completely suppressed, and nothing was known of it till the telegram was published six months later by the Austrian Government.

Instead of communicating this answer Germany broke off negotiations and declared war.

APPENDIX

We have in a previous chapter drawn attention to the repeated claims made by the German Government that they exercised extreme pressure upon Austria and pointed out that there is no evidence for the truth in these statements. During the negotiations on Thursday and Friday we find these statements recurring with increased frequency, and there is this difference from the earlier stage, that while for them the claim was only made afterwards, on these latter days it was repeatedly made at the time both by the Emperor, the Chancellor, and Herr von Jagow. Even, however, at this later period we find no real evidence that true pressure was exercised ; as before, the communications to Vienna have not been published, with the exception of the one statement made by the Chancellor in conversation with Sir Edward Goschen. Even this, on examination, proves not to be the exercise of pressure, but in reality an argument is put into the mouth of the Austrians which would have the effect of justifying them in refusing any concession.

There is indeed one exception to the negative attitude of German diplomacy.

We have a telegram which appears fully to substantiate the claim made that pressure was being brought to bear on Austria—a telegram which contains a severe censure on Count Tschirschky and a sharp warning to Austria.

(From *Westminster Gazette* for August 1st.)

BERLIN, July 30, 1914.

The report of Count Pourtalès does not harmonise with the account which Your Excellency has given of the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government.

Apparently there is a misunderstanding, which I beg you to clear up.

We cannot expect Austria-Hungary to negotiate with Serbia, with which she is in a state of war.

The refusal, however, to exchange views with St. Petersburg would be a grave mistake.

We are indeed ready to fulfil our duty.

As an ally we must, however, refuse to be drawn into a world conflagration through Austria-Hungary not respecting our advice.

Your Excellency will express this to Count Berchtold with all emphasis and great seriousness.

(Signed) BETHMANN-HOLLWEG.

Unfortunately, we are here confronted by a serious difficulty. This telegram was published in the *Westminster Gazette* of August 1st—it has been published there and nowhere else. It is not contained in the German official collection of documents which was issued four days later; it has apparently never been published in Germany in any form. How are we to understand this? Is it a fabrication produced merely in order to create a certain effect upon public opinion in England? Is it a draft telegram which was drawn up by the Chancellor, which he proposed to despatch and which was at the last moment stopped by other influences prevailing in the highest quarters? To these questions we are at present unable to give any answer, and shall not be able to do so until the public opinion of Germany forces the German Government to give a full, honest, and complete account of their action during these critical days.

The telegram is clearly genuine in the sense that it emanates from Berlin and was not fabricated in London. The reference to Count Pourtalès shows this. It is in entire accord with all our other information that he was at this time trying to find a peaceful issue, and in particular hoped to do so by bringing Russia and Austria together. In fact, the more closely the correspondence is studied, the more the conclusion is forced upon one that the real object of these assertions, made by the German Government, was to influence the British Government and the British nation, and to persuade them that it was Russia rather than Germany which was responsible for the war.

CHAPTER XI

THE GERMAN ULTIMATUM

I

As is so often the case, it is not easy to find out precisely what was being done by the German Government. We have many statements to the effect that every possible effort was made to keep the peace, but they are all rather vague, and precise indications are wanting. As before, none of the communications which passed between Berlin and Vienna are published. We have, therefore, to depend upon the statements made by the German Chancellor and Herr von Jagow, and on the summaries of the negotiations which were published afterwards.

On Thursday, as we have seen, Herr von Jagow had forwarded Sir E. Grey's proposal to Vienna, and given Sir E. Goschen to understand that it might prove acceptable.

On that day the French Ambassador saw him and reports as follows :

In the interview which I had to-day with the Secretary of State, I asked Herr von Jagow what reply he had made to Sir E. Grey, who had asked him to draw up himself the formula for the intervention of the disinterested Powers.

M. Jules Cambon,
July 30.

He answered that "to gain time" he had decided to act directly, and that he had asked Austria to tell him the ground on which conversations might be opened with her. This answer has the effect, under a pretext of proceeding more quickly, of eliminating England, France, and Italy, and of entrusting to Herr von Tschirschky, whose Pan-German and Russophobe sentiments are well known, the duty of persuading Austria to adopt a conciliatory attitude.¹

This is confirmed by another telegram from Sir Edward Goschen sent late on Thursday :

¹ F. 109.

I do not know whether you have received a reply from the German Government to the communication which you made to them through the German Ambassador in London asking whether they could suggest any method by which the four Powers could use their mediating influence between Russia and Austria. I was informed last night that they had not had time to send an answer yet. To-day, in reply to an inquiry from the French Ambassador as to whether the Imperial Government had proposed any course of action, the Secretary of State said that he had felt that time would be saved by communicating with Vienna direct, and that he had asked the Austro-Hungarian Government what would satisfy them. No answer had, however, yet been returned.

The Chancellor told me last night that he was "pressing the button" as hard as he could, and that he was not sure whether he had not gone so far in urging moderation at Vienna that matters had been precipitated rather than otherwise.¹

These statements seem to show that the German Government first communicated Sir Edward Grey's proposals and asked if they were acceptable, and then, having received no answer, secondly, in order to gain time, asked the Austrian Government to put forward the terms on which they would negotiate.

In a telegram sent to the British Government they give a different account; they state that they themselves put forward positive proposals which "were conceived naturally on the lines suggested by Great Britain"; what definite form they took we are not told.²

Meanwhile the Italian Government had made an independent suggestion. M. Giolitti told Sir Rennell Rodd:

he was telegraphing to the Italian Ambassador at Berlin to ask the German Government to suggest that the idea of an exchange of views between the four Powers should be resumed in any form which Austria would consider acceptable. It seemed to him that Germany might invite Austria to state exactly the terms which she would demand from Serbia, and give a guarantee that she would neither deprive her of independence nor annex territory. It would be useless to ask for anything less than was contained in the Austrian ultimatum, and Germany would support no proposal that might imply non-success for Austria. We might, on the other hand, ascertain from Russia what she would accept, and, once we knew

Sir R. Rodd,
July 30.

¹ E. 107.

² "Collected Diplomatic Documents," p. 536.

the standpoints of these two countries, discussions could be commenced at once. There was still time so long as Austria had received no check. He in any case was in favour of continuing an exchange of views with His Majesty's Government if the idea of discussions between the four Powers was impossible.¹

And Sir Edward Grey, acting apparently on this suggestion, made a fresh proposal :

I hope that the conversations which are now proceeding between Austria and Russia may lead to a satisfactory result.

The stumbling-block hitherto has been Austrian mistrust of Serbian assurances, and Russian mistrust of Austrian intentions with regard to the independence and integrity of Serbia. It has occurred to me that, in the event of this mistrust preventing a solution being found by Vienna and St. Petersburg, Germany might sound Vienna, and I would undertake to sound St. Petersburg, whether it would be possible for the four disinterested Powers to offer to Austria that they would undertake to see that she obtained full satisfaction of her demands on Serbia, provided that they did not impair Serbian sovereignty and the integrity of Serbian territory. As Your Excellency is aware, Austria has already declared her willingness to respect them. Russia might be informed by the four Powers that they would undertake to prevent Austrian demands going the length of impairing Serbian sovereignty and integrity. All Powers would of course suspend further military operations or preparations.

You may sound the Secretary of State about this proposal.

And he added the following striking offer :

I said to German Ambassador this morning that if Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris, and go the length of saying that if Russia and France would not accept it His Majesty's Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences ; but, otherwise, I told German Ambassador that if France became involved we should be drawn in.

You can add this when sounding Chancellor or Secretary of State as to proposal above.²

¹ E. 106.

² E. 111.

If then we visualise the situation in the early afternoon of Friday, we find that the Austrian attack on Serbia is continuing. Both Austria and Russia are passing from a partial to a complete mobilisation ; both States assert, however, that they have no hostile designs against one another, and both are willing to discuss the demands to be made by Austria on Serbia. The conversations between them continue to have a friendly tone. There is also before the parties a proposal that Russia will undertake to maintain her waiting attitude, on condition that Austria will agree to check the advance of her troops, and allow the Great Powers to look into the matter and determine whether Serbia could satisfy Austria without impairing her rights as a sovereign state ; and both Russia and Austria are willing to submit the matter to arbitration if the question of the armies can be settled.

The conjuncture was serious, menacing, but not hopeless. It seemed to require little more to make mediation at last an attained reality.

This was the moment when Germany decisively interfered and rudely brushed away all that had been achieved.

The Czar had, about two o'clock on Friday, telegraphed to the Emperor :

I thank you cordially for your mediation, which permits the hope that everything may yet end peaceably. It is technically impossible to discontinue our military preparations, which have been made necessary by the Austrian mobilisation. It is far from us to want war. As long as the negotiations between Austria and Serbia continue, my troops will undertake no provocative action. I give you my solemn word thereon. I confide with all my faith in the grace of God, and I hope for the success of your mediation in Vienna for the welfare of our countries and the peace of Europe.¹

He thereby confirmed the offer already made that Russia would maintain her waiting attitude as long as negotiations continued. Just at the same hour the Emperor had telegraphed to him :

Upon your appeal to my friendship and your request for my aid, I have engaged in mediation between your Government and

¹ German White Book, p. 9.

the Government of Austria-Hungary. While this action was taking place, your troops were being mobilised against my ally Austria-Hungary, whereby, as I have already communicated to you, my mediation has become almost illusory. In spite of this, I have continued it, and now I receive reliable news that serious preparations for war are going on on my eastern frontier. The responsibility for the security of my country forces me to measures of defence. I have gone to the extreme limit of the possible in my efforts for the preservation of the peace of the world. It is not I who bear the responsibility for the misfortune which now threatens the entire civilised world. It rests in your hand to avert it. No one threatens the honour and peace of Russia, which might well have awaited the success of my mediation. The friendship for you and your country, bequeathed to me by my grandfather on his deathbed, has always been sacred to me, and I have stood faithfully by Russia while it was in serious affliction, especially during its last war. The peace of Europe can still be preserved by you if Russia decides to discontinue those military preparations which menace Germany and Austria-Hungary.¹

The emotion which this telegram shows was doubtless genuine, and yet we see in it that same complete inability to understand the case of his opponents which had all through been the real impediment to peace. "No one threatens the honour and peace of Russia." But surely that was a matter on which Russia must be heard, and the whole of Russia with one voice proclaimed that her honour and interest were involved in the fate of Serbia. And his mediation—he had been asked to "restrain Austria"—what result had there been? The bombardment of Belgrade and the invasion of the country. Mediation might indeed continue, but it must be between two armed States, not between one already mobilised and belligerent and the other patiently waiting unarmed while her ally is crushed to the ground. And the last sentence, how ominous it is. What are the conditions of peace? "That Russia shall discontinue the preparations which menace Germany and Austria." Why add Austria? Was not this a matter for Austria herself? At the beginning of the negotiations Germany had professed almost excessive deference to Austria when it was a question of mediation; now, when it is a question of war, Austria is put aside like a child, and Germany comes forward alone.

¹ German White Book, p. 13.

About the same time he telegraphed to King George :

Many thanks for your friendly communication. Your proposals agree with my ideas and with the information which I have received to-night from Vienna and which I send on to London. I have just learned through the Imperial Chancellor that he has received the information that the Czar has ordered this evening the mobilisation of all his army and navy. He has not even waited for the result of the intervention on which I have been engaged, and has left me entirely without information. I am going to Berlin in order to take measures for the safeguarding of my eastern frontiers, where numerous Russian troops have already assembled.¹

During an interview this morning with Sir E. Goschen the Chancellor said :

Chancellor informs me that his efforts to preach peace and moderation at Vienna have been seriously handicapped by the Russian mobilisation against Austria. He has done
Sir E. Goschen,
July 31. everything possible to attain his object at Vienna, perhaps even rather more than was altogether palatable at the Ballplatz. He could not, however, leave his country defenceless while time was being utilised by other Powers; and if, as he learns is the case, military measures are now being taken by Russia against Germany also, it would be impossible for him to remain quiet. He wished to tell me that it was quite possible that in a very short time, to-day perhaps, the German Government would take some very serious step; he was, in fact, just on the point of going to have an audience with the Emperor.

His Excellency added that the news of the active preparations on the Russo-German frontier had reached him just when the Czar had appealed to the Emperor, in the name of their old friendship, to mediate at Vienna, and when the Emperor was actually conforming to that request.²

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has just told me that our discussions, which were already difficult enough on account of the mobilisation against Austria, were becoming
M. Swerbée,
July 31. even more so in view of the serious military measures that we were taking against Germany. He said that information on this subject was reaching Berlin from all sides, and thus must inevitably provoke similar measures on the part of Germany. To this I replied that according to sure information in my possession, which was confirmed by all our compatriots arriving from Berlin, Germany also

¹ "Collected Diplomatic Documents," p. 539.

² E. 108.

was very actively engaged in taking military measures against Russia. In spite of this, the Minister for Foreign Affairs asserts that the only step taken in Germany has been the recall of officers from leave and of the troops from manœuvres.¹

Early that afternoon (at midday, F. 117) the state of *Kriegsgefahr* was proclaimed in Germany.

According to information just received by German Government from their Ambassador at St. Petersburg, whole Russian army and fleet are being mobilised. Chancellor tells me Sir E. Goschen, July 31. that "*Kriegsgefahr*"² will be proclaimed at once by German Government, as it can only be against Germany that Russian general mobilisation is directed. Mobilisation would follow almost immediately. His Excellency added in explanation that "*Kriegsgefahr*" signified the taking of certain precautionary measures consequent upon strained relations with a foreign country.

This news from St. Petersburg, added His Excellency, seemed to him to put an end to all hope of a peaceful solution of the crisis. Germany must certainly prepare for all emergencies.

I asked him whether he could not still put pressure on the authorities at Vienna to do something in general interests to reassure Russia and to show themselves disposed to continue discussions on a friendly basis. He replied that last night he had begged Austria to reply to your last proposal, and that he had received a reply to the effect that Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs would take wishes of the Emperor this morning in the matter.³

And the following telegram was sent to the Ambassador at St. Petersburg :

In spite of negotiations still pending and although we have up to this hour made no preparations for mobilisation, Russia has mobilised her entire army and navy, hence also Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, July 31. against us. On account of these Russian measures we have been forced, for the safety of the country, to proclaim the threatening state of war, which does not yet imply mobilisation. Mobilisation, however, is bound to follow if Russia does not stop every measure of war against Austria-Hungary within twelve hours and notifies us definitely to this effect. Please to communicate this at once to M. Sazonof and hour of communication.⁴

¹ R. 68.

² Imminence of war.

³ E. 112.

⁴ G. 24.

This message was delivered to M. Sazonof at midnight :

At midnight the German Ambassador announced to me, on the instruction of his Government, that if within twelve hours, that is by midnight [*sic*] on Saturday, we had not begun to demobilise, not only against Germany, but also against Austria, the German Government would be compelled to give the order for mobilisation. To my inquiry whether this meant war, the Ambassador replied in the negative, but added that we were very near it.¹

M. Sazonof,
August 1.

The fatal step had been taken and they were deaf to all remonstrances.

That evening Sir Edward Goschen saw Herr von Jagow.

I spent an hour with Secretary of State urging him most earnestly to accept your proposal and make another effort to prevent terrible catastrophe of a European war.

Sir E. Goschen,
July 31.

He expressed himself very sympathetically towards your proposal, and appreciated your continued efforts to maintain peace, but said it was impossible for the Imperial Government to consider any proposal until they had received an answer from Russia to their communication of to-day; this communication, which he admitted had the form of an ultimatum, being that, unless Russia could inform the Imperial Government within twelve hours that she would immediately countermand her mobilisation against Germany and Austria, Germany would be obliged on her side to mobilise at once.

I asked His Excellency why they had made their demand even more difficult for Russia to accept by asking them to demobilise in south as well. He replied that it was in order to prevent Russia from saying all her mobilisation was only directed against Austria.

His Excellency said that if the answer from Russia was satisfactory he thought personally that your proposal merited favourable consideration, and in any case he would lay it before the Emperor and Chancellor, but he repeated that it was no use discussing it until the Russian Government had sent in their answer to the German demand.

He again assured me that both the Emperor William, at the request of the Emperor of Russia, and the German Foreign Office had even up till last night been urging Austria to show willingness to continue discussions—and telegraphic and telephonic communications from Vienna had been of a promising nature—but Russia's mobilisation had spoilt everything.²

¹ R. 70.

² E. 121.

Germany therefore, immediately the mobilisation of the whole Russian army was announced, put her army in a state of preparation, and presented to Russia an ultimatum so worded that it was impossible that it should be accepted; at the same time, she peremptorily broke off all negotiations and refused to listen to any proposals of any kind until an answer had been received from Russia; she knew that no answer could come except one in the direct negative.

In considering this action, which was the immediate cause of war, let us first look to the German explanation of it. We have seen that proposals were at this time before the Austrian Government which, if accepted, might have led to the solution of the whole difficulty. According to a German statement, the matter was to be discussed on the morning of the 31st, but the news of the complete Russian mobilisation came while it was under discussion.

The proposals made by the German Government in Vienna were conceived entirely on the lines suggested by Great Britain, and the German Government recommended them in Vienna for their serious consideration. They were taken into consideration in Vienna this morning. During the deliberations of the [? Austrian] Cabinet, and before they were concluded, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg reported the mobilisation of the entire Russian army and fleet. Owing to this action on the part of Russia, the Austrian answer to the German proposals for mediation, which were still under consideration, was not given.¹

This may indeed be true to the letter. German proposals had, as we may believe, been sent; what they were we do not know; they have not even been published; we have to take them on trust. No answer had yet come to them. This is, however, in fact, of little importance, for, as we have seen, an answer was sent by Austria to Sir Edward Grey's proposal: this was much more important; it was the first in the field; it was only the delay in answering it that had made it necessary for Germany to make any separate proposal; it had been communicated to Russia, and to a very large extent been accepted by the Russian Government, and an answer to it from Austria, if conveyed to Sir Edward Grey, would have enabled him to begin the actual work of mediation. Now an answer to Sir Edward Grey's proposal had been sent, but the answer was suppressed; it was

¹ "Collected Diplomatic Documents," p. 536.

never communicated to Sir Edward Grey, and it was the suppression of this answer which made it possible for the German Government to make it appear that the reason why nothing had come from Vienna was the mobilisation of the Russian army.

The reasons given by the German Government for breaking off negotiations are then not true; the only real reason is to be found in their own will.

The mobilisation of both Russia and Austria had indeed introduced a new factor into the situation. It was just this situation which the proposals of England and Italy were designed to meet. The action of Germany fastened on the mobilisation of Russia, but ignored that of Austria, although it is quite clear that, whichever was decided first, Austrian general mobilisation was decreed before they knew of Russian general mobilisation. It would have been quite possible at the consultation on Friday to have adopted, with such modifications as were desirable, either the Russian formula or the Italian proposal and made this a basis for a firm offer on which mediation might immediately have started; there would have been included in this the condition that Russia should cease her mobilisation in return for some similar concession from Austria, and it would have been natural to have informed the mediating Powers that if this was not accepted within a definite period of time, Germany would be compelled to mobilise in self-defence. Some such course as this would have preserved the dignity of both Austria and Germany; it would have provided for the security of Germany against an unprovoked attack just as well as did the course which was actually followed.

No one will suggest that so serious a step as the mobilisation of the whole Russian army could have been overlooked by Germany, and, of course, it was necessary for them to take instant precautionary measures, such as that included in the proclamation of *Kriegsgefahr*. However peaceful the dispositions of the German Government were, it was also clearly necessary that they should at once take steps to have the mobilisation stopped. It was open to them to have the demand that this measure should be recalled or suspended addressed to Russia by the neutral Powers speaking in the name of Europe; instead of that they chose to make the demand in their own name. The

first course might have been successful—the second could only lead to immediate war.

II

There was then no reason why Russian mobilisation should have stopped all negotiations; though it might indeed have altered their character. But there is something more; we have evidence that whatever was the case with the German Government, the Austrian Government did not take this view. In order to make this clear, we must return to the history of the separate conversations with Russia which had begun on Wednesday and on Thursday. As we have seen, the Austrian Government on Thursday was willing to continue these conversations, but as a matter of fact, on that day no fresh interview seems to have taken place between the Austrian Ambassador and M. Sazonof. Suddenly, on Friday, late in the evening, and even on Saturday morning, *i.e.* some time after the delivery of the German ultimatum, we find that this idea of conversations is being pressed by Austria.

Throughout all the negotiations, it will have been noticed that Austria herself seems to have kept rather in the background; she seems to have left the discussions with other Governments chiefly in the hands of Germany; it was through Germany that proposals were conveyed to her, and it was Germany who chiefly represented the Allied Powers at the other Courts. Suddenly this reticence disappears, and after the critical midday on Friday, we find the Austrian Ambassadors, both at Paris and London, coming forward and spontaneously offering repeated assurances that Austria is quite ready to negotiate, will accept mediation, and will agree to it on terms which had hitherto been refused.

We have a remarkable telegram from Paris, sent apparently on Saturday morning.

A despatch from the French Minister for Foreign Affairs says:

Two *démarches* were made yesterday evening by the Austrian Ambassadors—the one at Paris, which was rather vague, the other at St. Petersburg, precise and conciliatory.

M. René Viviani, Count Scézszen came to explain to me that the August 1.

Austro-Hungarian Government had officially informed Russia that it had no territorial ambition, and would not

touch the sovereignty of Serbia; that it also repudiates any intention of occupying the Sandjak; but that these explanations of disinterestedness only retain their force if the war remains localised to Austria and Serbia, as a European war would open out eventualities which it was impossible to foresee. The Austrian Ambassador, in commenting on these explanations, gave me to understand that if his Government could not answer the question of the Powers speaking in their own name, they would certainly answer Serbia, or any single Power asking for these conditions in the name of Serbia. He added that a step in this direction was perhaps still possible.

At St. Petersburg the Austrian Ambassador called on M. Sazonof and explained to him that his Government was willing to begin a discussion as to the basis of the ultimatum addressed to Serbia. The Russian Minister declared himself satisfied with this declaration, and proposed that the *pourparlers* should take place in London with the participation of the Powers. M. Sazonof will have requested the English Government to take the lead in the discussion; he pointed out that it would be very important that Austria should stop her operations in Serbia.

The deduction from these facts is that Austria would at last show herself ready to come to an agreement, just as the Russian Government is ready to enter into negotiations on the basis of the English proposal.¹

My Russian colleague received yesterday evening two telegrams from M. Sazonof advising him that the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg had explained that his
 M. Jules Cambon, Government was ready to discuss the Note to
 August 1.

Serbia with the Russian Government even as to its basis; M. Sazonof answered that in his opinion these conversations should take place in London.²

This is confirmed by other sources; as to the communication made at Paris, Sir Edward Grey writes on Saturday morning :

I saw the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador this morning. He supplied me with the substance of a telegram which the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs had sent to the Austrian Ambassador in Paris. In this telegram His Excellency was given instructions to
 Sir E. Grey to
 Sir M. de Bunsen,
 August 1.

assure the French Minister for Foreign Affairs that there was no intention in the minds of the Austro-Hungarian Government to impair the sovereign rights of Serbia or to obtain territorial aggrandisement. The Ambassador added that he was

¹ F. 120.

² F. 121.

further instructed to inform the French Minister for Foreign Affairs that there was no truth in the report which had been published in Paris to the effect that Austria-Hungary intended to occupy the Sandjak.¹

Later in the day Count Mensdorff called again to see Sir Edward Grey, and made another communication which confirms the French statement as to the negotiations at St. Petersburg.

Count Mensdorff called again later at the Foreign Office. He informed me of a telegram sent yesterday to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at St. Petersburg by Count Berchtold, and gave me the substance.

It states that Count Berchtold begged the Russian Ambassador, whom he sent for yesterday, to do his best to remove the wholly erroneous impression in St. Petersburg that the "door had been banged" by Austria-Hungary on all further conversations. The Russian Ambassador promised to do this. Count Berchtold repeated on this occasion to the Russian Ambassador the assurance which had already been given at St. Petersburg, to the effect that neither an infraction of Serbian sovereign rights nor the acquisition of Serbian territory was being contemplated by Austria-Hungary.¹

Sir Edward Grey adds at the end of his telegram the following words: "Special attention was called by Count Mensdorff to the fact that this telegram contains a statement to the effect that conversations at St. Petersburg have not been broken off by Austria-Hungary." This interview took place on Saturday morning, and as it was the second interview on that day, it could not have been very early; it was certainly after the news of the German ultimatum had been received. We have it therefore on the best authority that at this time the Austrian Government at least wished Sir Edward Grey to believe that they were willing to continue negotiations. Count Mensdorff lays stress on the fact that negotiations have not been broken off by Austria. He is defending his Government against an implied accusation, and showing that it was not they who were responsible for the rupture of negotiations. It was also clear that Russia had not broken off conversations; she had in fact repeatedly expressed her willingness to continue them notwith-

¹ E. 137.

standing the mobilisation ; this statement could have no other object except definitely to dissociate Austria from the action of Germany.¹

The only evidence we have from Austria is a telegram of Count Szápáry dated August 1st, as follows :

I visited M. Sazonof to-day, and told him that I had received instructions, but that I must premise that I was entirely ignorant of the present condition of affairs in Vienna, which
 Count Szápáry, August 1. had arisen owing to the general Russian mobilisation, and that in interpreting the instructions which I had received previously, I must leave such condition out of account. I said that the two instructions of Your Excellency dealt with the misunderstanding that we had declined further negotiations with Russia. This was a mistake, as I had already, without instructions, assured him. Your Excellency was not only quite prepared to deal with Russia on the broadest basis possible, but was also especially inclined to subject the text of our Note to a discussion in so far as related to its interpretation.

I emphasised how much the instructions of Your Excellency offered me a further proof of goodwill, although I had to remind him that the situation created since then by the general mobilisation was unknown to me, but I could only hope that the course of events had not already taken us too far ; in any case, I regarded it as my duty in the present moment of extreme anxiety to prove once again the goodwill of the Imperial and Royal Government. M. Sazonof replied that he took note with satisfaction of this proof of goodwill, but he desired to draw my attention to the fact that negotiations in St. Petersburg for obvious reasons appeared to promise less prospect of success than negotiations on the neutral London *terrain*. I replied that Your Excellency, as I had already observed, started from the point of view that direct contact should be maintained at St. Petersburg, so that I was not in a

¹ There is some difficulty about these statements. They refer to telegrams sent from Vienna to St. Petersburg on Friday ; it seems, however, that they must mean those which, according to the Austrian account, were sent on Thursday. No further instructions seem to have been sent to St. Petersburg after Thursday, and the description given by Count Scézszen and Count Mensdorff agrees in general with those which we have quoted above. As the statements at Paris and London are only second or only third hand, we must give a preference to those contained in the Austrian Red Book. The importance of these statements, however, is that they clearly show that after the Russian general mobilisation, and indeed after the German ultimatum, Austria was anxious to prove both at London and Paris that the responsibility for breaking off negotiations did not belong to her.

position to commit myself with regard to his suggestion as to London, but I would communicate on the subject with Your Excellency.¹

And a telegram from Sir G. Buchanan :

In the evening M. Sazonof had an interview with the Austrian Ambassador, who, not being definitely instructed by his Government, did his best to deflect the conversation towards a general discussion of the relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia instead of keeping to the question of Serbia. In reply the Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed his desire that these relations should remain friendly, and said that, taken in general, they were perfectly satisfactory; but the real question which they had to solve at this moment was whether Austria was to crush Serbia and to reduce her to the status of a vassal, or whether she was to leave Serbia a free and independent State. In these circumstances, while the Serbian question was unsolved, the abstract discussion of the relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia was a waste of time. The only place where a successful discussion of this question could be expected was London, and any such discussion was being made impossible by the action of Austria-Hungary in subjecting Belgrade, a virtually unfortified town, to bombardment.²

Sir G. Buchanan,
August 1.

On Friday evening then M. Sazonof was still willing that these negotiations should be continued, though he wished it to be at London, and Count Szápáry had received no instructions to break them off. On Saturday morning the Austrian Ambassador was assuring Sir Edward Grey that his Government was willing to continue.

On Saturday morning also it seems that Sir Edward Grey had, through some indirect channel (we are not told what it was), received information as to Austrian readiness to accept his proposal for mediation—that is the answer of Austria, which, as we have seen, had not been communicated to him from Berlin; and in consequence he telegraphed as follows to St. Petersburg :

¹ A. 56. The date is incorrect, or the telegram must have been sent in the early hours of Saturday morning: the interview took place on Friday evening, as we see from the account of Sir G. Buchanan.

² E. 139.

Information reaches me from a most reliable source that Austrian Government have informed German Government that though the situation has been changed by the mobilisation of Russia they would in full appreciation of the efforts of England for the preservation of peace be ready to consider favourably my proposal for mediation between Austria and Serbia. The effect of this acceptance would naturally be that the Austrian military action against Serbia would continue for the present, and that the British Government would urge upon Russian Government to stop the mobilisation of troops directed against Austria, in which case Austria would naturally cancel those defensive military counter-measures in Galicia which have been forced upon Austria by Russian mobilisation.

You should inform Minister for Foreign Affairs and say that if, in the consideration of the acceptance of mediation by Austria, Russia can agree to stop mobilisation, it appears still to be possible to preserve peace. Presumably the matter should be discussed with German Government also by Russian Government.¹

We see how this answer, if he had received it officially, would have strengthened his hands to bring about by peaceful means the suspension of Russian mobilisation, which Germany attempted to bring about by her ultimatum.

That negotiations were going on in a friendly spirit at Vienna is also shown by a Russian telegram :

In spite of the general mobilisation, my exchange of views with Count Berchtold and his colleagues continues. They all dwell upon the absence on Austria's part of any hostile intentions whatsoever against Russia, and of any designs of conquest at the expense of Serbia, but they are all equally insistent that Austria is bound to carry through the action which she has begun and to give Serbia a serious lesson, which would constitute a sure guarantee for the future.²

Sir Maurice de Bunsen also confirms this aspect of the situation in a despatch which, though written some weeks later, adds substantially to our knowledge.

The German Government claim to have persevered to the end in the endeavour to support at Vienna your successive proposals in the interest of peace. Herr von Tschirschky abstained from

¹ E. 135.

² R. 66.

inviting my co-operation or that of the French and Russian Ambassadors in carrying out his instructions to that effect, and I had no means of knowing what response he was receiving from the Austro-Hungarian Government.

Sir M. de Bunsen,
September 1.

I was, however, kept fully informed by M. Schebeko, the Russian Ambassador, of his own direct negotiations with Count Berchtold. M. Schebeko endeavoured on the 28th of July to persuade the Austro-Hungarian Government to furnish Count Szápáry with full powers to continue at St. Petersburg the hopeful conversations which had there been taking place between the latter and M. Sazonof. Count Berchtold refused at the time, but two days later (30th of July), though in the meantime Russia had partially mobilised against Austria, he received M. Schebeko again, in a perfectly friendly manner, and gave his consent to the continuance of the conversations at St. Petersburg. From now onwards the tension between Russia and Germany was much greater than between Russia and Austria. As between the latter an arrangement seemed almost in sight, and on the 1st of August I was informed by M. Schebeko that Count Szápáry had at last conceded the main point at issue by announcing to M. Sazonof that Austria would consent to submit to mediation the points in the Note to Serbia which seemed incompatible with the maintenance of Serbian independence. M. Sazonof, M. Schebeko added, had accepted this proposal on condition that Austria would refrain from the actual invasion of Serbia. Austria, in fact, had finally yielded, and that she herself had at this point good hopes of a peaceful issue is shown by the communication made to you on the 1st of August by Count Mensdorff, to the effect that Austria had neither "banged the door" on compromise nor cut off the conversations. M. Schebeko to the end was working hard for peace. He was holding the most conciliatory language to Count Berchtold, and he informed me that the latter, as well as Count Forgách, had responded in the same spirit. Certainly it was too much for Russia to expect that Austria would hold back her armies, but this matter could probably have been settled by negotiation, and M. Schebeko repeatedly told me he was prepared to accept any reasonable compromise.

Unfortunately these conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia. Germany intervened on the 31st of July by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris. The ultimatums were of a kind to which only one answer is possible, and Germany declared war on Russia on the 1st of August, and on France on the 3rd of August. A few days' delay might in all probability have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history.¹

¹ E. 161.

The contrast between the German and the Austrian attitude was so obvious that it could not be hidden. The best comment on it is that of M. Cambon, always so incisive in his criticism.

The ultimatum to Russia can only do away with the last chances of peace which these conversations still seemed to leave. The question may be asked whether in such circumstances the acceptance by Austria was serious, and had not the object of throwing the responsibility of the conflict on to Russia.

M. Jules Cambon,
August 1.

My British colleague during the night made a pressing appeal to Herr von Jagow's feelings of humanity. The latter answered that the matter had gone too far and that they must wait for the Russian answer to the German ultimatum. But he told Sir Edward Goschen that the ultimatum required that the Russians should countermand their mobilisation, not only as against Germany but also as against Austria; my British colleague was much astonished at this, and said that it did not seem possible for Russia to accept this last point.

Germany's ultimatum coming at the very moment when an agreement seemed about to be established between Vienna and St. Petersburg, is characteristic of her warlike policy.

In truth the conflict was between Russia and Austria only, and Germany could only intervene as an ally of Austria; in these circumstances, as the two Powers which were interested as principals were prepared for conversations, it is impossible to understand why Germany should send an ultimatum to Russia instead of continuing like all the other Powers to work for a peaceful solution, unless she desired war on her own account.¹

But this is not the end. Not only did Austria show her willingness to continue negotiations after Germany had broken them off, but in the most marked manner she continued to dissociate herself from her ally. A few days before she had asked Germany to join with her in a protest against Russian mobilisation, and to threaten countermeasures of mobilisation; she had always asked that this should be done in a friendly way; and she had never used any language which would make us believe that she wished to pass on from these protests to an actual ultimatum and declaration of war against Russia. Now when Germany took this latter step she refused to follow her. We should have expected that as soon as the German ultimatum was sent Austria would take a similar step. She did not do so.

¹ F. 121.

Her Ambassador remained at St. Petersburg, no action of any kind was taken, and she continued to hold this waiting and pacific attitude for another four days.

What was the explanation of this? We look to the Austrian Red Book and we find none. In it the German ultimatum is in fact scarcely mentioned. Nothing could be more significant than the arrangement and sequence of the despatches. In their own publication the last despatch from Vienna ends with the words "the *pourparlers* between the Governments at Vienna and St. Petersburg appropriate to the situation are meanwhile being continued, and from these we hope that things will quieten down all round." This is the very last word. From this time all is silence. The German ultimatum is only mentioned as intelligence from Paris; the information that war has been declared is conveyed in a telegram from the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, but still Vienna remains silent. Four days passed before a declaration of war against Russia was sent.

CHAPTER XII

DECLARATION OF WAR ON RUSSIA

THE German ultimatum was then presented by Count Pourtalès at midnight on Friday. The next morning Sir George Buchanan saw M. Sazonof, and he gives us an account of Russian feelings :

M. Sazonof informed the French Ambassador and myself this morning of his conversation with the Austrian Ambassador. He went on to say that during the Balkan crisis he had Sir G. Buchanan, August 1. made it clear to the Austrian Government that war with Russia must inevitably follow an Austrian attack on Serbia. It was clear that Austrian domination of Serbia was as intolerable for Russia as the dependence of the Netherlands on Germany would be to Great Britain. It was, in fact, for Russia a question of life and death. The policy of Austria had throughout been both tortuous and immoral, and she thought that she could treat Russia with defiance, secure in the support of her German ally. Similarly the policy of Germany had been an equivocal and double-faced policy, and it mattered little whether the German Government knew or did not know the terms of the Austrian ultimatum ; what mattered was that her intervention with the Austrian Government had been postponed until the moment had passed when its influence would have been felt. Germany was unfortunate in her representatives in Vienna and St. Petersburg : the former was a violent Russophobe who had urged Austria on ; the latter had reported to his Government that Russia would never go to war. M. Sazonof was completely weary of the ceaseless endeavours he had made to avoid a war. No suggestion held out to him had been refused. He had accepted the proposal for a conference of four, for mediation by Great Britain and Italy, for direct conversation between Austria and Russia ; but Germany and Austria-Hungary had either rendered these attempts for peace ineffective by evasive replies or had refused them altogether. The action of the Austro-Hungarian Government and the German preparations had forced the Russian Government to order mobilisation, and the mobilisation of Germany had created a desperate situation.

M. Sazonof added that the formula, of which the text is contained in my telegram of 31st of July, had been forwarded by the Russian Government to Vienna, and he would adhere to it if you could obtain its acceptance before the frontier was crossed by German troops. In no case would Russia begin hostilities first.

I now see no possibility of a general war being avoided unless the agreement of France and Germany can be obtained to keep their armies mobilised on their own sides of the frontier, as Russia has expressed her readiness to do, pending a last attempt to reach a settlement of the present crisis.¹

Even at this late moment the English Government did not discontinue their efforts to bring about some understanding. At 3.30 on Saturday morning a telegram was sent to Sir George Buchanan instructing him to apply for an audience with the Emperor and deliver a personal message from the King. This enclosed the communication received from the German Government (see above, page 241), and the King then continued :

I cannot help thinking that some misunderstanding has produced this deadlock. I am most anxious not to miss any possibility of avoiding the terrible calamity which at present threatens the whole world. I therefore make a personal appeal to you to remove the misapprehension which I feel must have occurred, and to leave still open grounds for negotiation and possible peace. If you think I can in any way contribute to that all-important purpose, I will do everything in my power to assist in reopening the interrupted conversations between the Powers concerned. I feel confident that you are as anxious as I am that all that is possible should be done to secure the peace of the world.

Sir Edward Grey also telegraphed on Saturday morning to Sir Edward Goschen :

I still believe that it might be possible to secure peace if only a little respite in time can be gained before any Great Power begins war.

Sir Edward Grey, August 1. The Russian Government has communicated to me the readiness of Austria to discuss with Russia and the readiness of Austria to accept a basis of mediation which is not open to the objections raised in regard to the formula which Russia originally suggested.

¹ E. 139. (

Things ought not to be hopeless so long as Austria and Russia are ready to converse, and I hope that the German Government may be able to make use of the Russian communications referred to above, in order to avoid tension. His Majesty's Government are carefully abstaining from any act which may precipitate matters.¹

And another telegram to Sir George Buchanan :

Information reaches me from a most reliable source that Austrian Government have informed German Government that though the situation has been changed by the mobilisation of Russia they would in full appreciation of the efforts of England for the preservation of peace be ready to consider favourably my proposal for mediation between Austria and Serbia.² The effect of this acceptance would naturally be that the Austrian military action against Serbia would continue for the present, and that the British Government would urge upon Russian Government to stop the mobilisation of troops directed against Austria, in which case Austria would naturally cancel those defensive military countermeasures in Galicia, which have been forced upon Austria by Russian mobilisation.

You should inform Minister for Foreign Affairs and say that if, in the consideration of the acceptance of mediation by Austria, Russia can agree to stop mobilisation, it appears still to be possible to preserve peace. Presumably the matter should be discussed with German Government also by Russian Government.³

Sir Edward Goschen saw Herr von Jagow and communicated to him Sir Edward Grey's message :

I have communicated the substance of the above telegram to the Secretary of State, and spent a long time arguing with him that the chief dispute was between Austria and Russia, and that Germany was only drawn in as Austria's ally. If therefore Austria and Russia were, as was evident, ready to discuss matters and Germany did not desire war on her own account, it seemed to me only logical that Germany should hold her hand and continue to work for a peaceful settlement. Secretary of State said that Austria's

¹ E. 131.

² This clearly refers to the telegram which was quoted above (p. 237) : though it was not communicated by the German Government, it had come to Sir E. Grey's knowledge from some other source.

³ E. 135.

readiness to discuss was the result of German influence at Vienna, and, had not Russia mobilised against Germany, all would have been well. But Russia, by abstaining from answering Germany's demand that she should demobilise, had caused Germany to mobilise also. Russia had said that her mobilisation did not necessarily imply war, and that she could perfectly well remain mobilised for months without making war. This was not the case with Germany. She had the speed and Russia had the numbers, and the safety of the German Empire forbade that Germany should allow Russia time to bring up masses of troops from all parts of her wide dominions. The situation now was that, though the Imperial Government had allowed her several hours beyond the specified time, Russia had sent no answer. Germany had therefore ordered mobilisation, and the German representative at St. Petersburg had been instructed within a certain time to inform the Russian Government that the Imperial Government must regard their refusal to an answer as creating a state of war.¹

It was, however, all in vain. The German ultimatum barred the way to any further negotiations. Until it was withdrawn there was no step possible for Russia, and the German Government refused to withdraw or modify it.

The hour of twelve arrived and no answer was sent by the Russian Government; there was a further exchange of telegrams between the Czar and the Emperor:

I have received your telegram. I comprehend that you are forced to mobilise, but I should like to have from you the same guarantee which I have given you, viz., that these measures do not mean war, and that we shall continue to negotiate for the welfare of our two countries and the universal peace which is so dear to our hearts. With the aid of God it must be possible to our long-trying friendship to prevent the shedding of blood. I expect with full confidence your urgent reply.

To this the Emperor replied:

I thank you for your telegram. I have shown yesterday to your Government the way through which alone war may yet be averted. Although I asked for a reply by to-day noon, no telegram from my Ambassador has reached me with the reply of your Government. I therefore have been forced to mobilise my army. An immediate, clear and unmistakable reply of your Government is the sole way to avoid endless misery. Until I

¹ E. 138.

receive this reply I am unable, to my great grief, to enter upon the subject of your telegram. I must ask most earnestly that you, without delay, order your troops to commit, under no circumstances, the slightest violation of our frontiers.

Shortly after midday a telegram was despatched to Count Pourtalès instructing him that if he had not received a satisfactory reply to hand in the declaration of war at five o'clock that afternoon.

The Imperial German Government have used every effort since the beginning of the crisis to bring about a peaceful settlement. In compliance with a wish expressed to him by His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, the German Emperor had undertaken, in concert with Great Britain, the part of mediator between the Cabinets of Vienna and St. Petersburg; but Russia, without waiting for any result, proceeded to a general mobilisation of her forces both on land and sea. In consequence of this threatening step, which was not justified by any military proceedings on the part of Germany, the German Empire was faced by a grave and imminent danger. If the German Government had failed to guard against this peril, they would have compromised the safety and very existence of Germany. The German Government were, therefore, obliged to make representations to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias and to insist upon a cessation of the aforesaid military acts. Russia having refused to comply with [not having considered it necessary to answer¹] this demand, and having shown by this refusal [this attitude¹] that her action was directed against Germany, I have the honour, on the instructions of my Government, to inform Your Excellency as follows:

His Majesty the Emperor, my august Sovereign, in the name of the German Empire, accepts the challenge, and considers himself at war with Russia.²

The German White book has the following account of this:

The German Ambassador at St. Petersburg was instructed that, in the event of the Russian Government not giving a satisfactory reply within the stipulated time, he should declare that we considered ourselves in a state of war after the refusal of our demands. However, before a confirmation of the execution of this order had

¹ The words in brackets occur in the original. It must be supposed that two variations had been prepared in advance, and that, by mistake, they were both inserted in the Note.

² R. 76.

been received, that is to say, already in the afternoon of August 1st, *i.e.* the same afternoon on which the telegram of the Czar, cited above, was sent, Russian troops crossed our frontier and marched into German territory.

Thus Russia began the war against us.

As is pointed out below (see page 284), we have no information which would enable us to check the accuracy of this statement, nor do we know whether the alleged movements took place before the declaration of war.

The Austrian declaration of war did not follow till August 5th.

I ask Your Excellency to hand over the following Note to the Minister for Foreign Affairs :

“On the instructions of his Government, the Count Berchtold, undersigned, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, August 5.

has the honour to inform His Excellency the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs as follows :

“In view of the threatening attitude adopted by Russia in the conflict between the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Serbia ; and of the fact that, according to a communication from the Berlin Cabinet, Russia has seen fit, as a result of that conflict, to open hostilities against Germany ; and whereas Germany is consequently at war with Russia ; Austria-Hungary therefore considers herself also at war with Russia from the present moment.”

After handing over this Note Your Excellency will ask that passports should be prepared, and you will leave without delay with the entire staff of the Embassy with the exception of any members who are to be left behind. At the same time M. von Schebecko is being furnished with his passport by us.¹

And so the die was cast. The efforts of the week were fruitless, and the war which all had professed to dread had begun. The world was confronted with the “incalculable consequences” which the first German Note had indicated, and the forebodings with which Sir Edward Grey had read the Austrian ultimatum were fulfilled.

All the statesmen of Europe had been at one in this, that they professed that peace was their only endeavour. How then, had war come about ? On whom is the responsibility to be placed, or was it all an unintentional but tragic mistake ?

The German answer is positive. Russia, and Russian mobilisation had brought about this catastrophe. At a later

¹ A. 59.

date they added that it was Great Britain who were publicly professing to desire mediation, but had done so only to mislead Germany, and all the time had secretly encouraged Russia.

The answer seems superficial. We must go a step farther back, and ask why Russia had mobilised. What was the real course of events?

Austria had made demands on Serbia, partly no doubt justified, but these were accompanied by others so worded that, according to the opinion of all observers, they could not be, and were not intended to be accepted. These had been made with the full knowledge that an attack on Serbia would almost inevitably bring Russia into the field. The challenge was made and was at once taken up, and Russia declared to all the world that she could not be disinterested in the fate of Serbia. At once the whole diplomacy of Europe was concentrated on settling this difference by amicable agreement and discussion. All these suggestions were rejected by Austria and by Germany. After they had been rejected, and not till then, did Russia begin to mobilise. Long before she did so, Germany used threatening language; Russia, unable in any other way to get the hearing she demanded, refused to suspend her mobilisation and was forced by the threats of Germany to extend it.

And what was the cause which led Russia to these serious measures? It was no mere diplomatic dispute, no empty point of honour; it was to prevent a friendly and allied State from being crushed by an immense superiority of force; it was to prevent a wave of war and destruction overwhelming a whole nation; it was to prevent a State of kindred race and religion being brought under the control of an alien rule. She did not begin war; she only tried to avert it. To the last she uttered no word of menace; all she did was to try and get a hearing for the warning and moderating voice of Europe.

What was it for which Austria and Germany allowed matters to get to this stage? It was not the question whether Serbia should give guarantees for future good conduct; it was the question whether the nature and extent of these guarantees should be dictated at the head of a conquering army or agreed to by the common sense of Europe. They made war in order to prove their right to make war. They made war in order to prevent reason, conciliation, moderation being heard. They

appealed to the sword in order to uphold the rights of the sword. At any time, down to the very moment when the declaration of war was signed, they had only to speak the word, and in whatever form they wished the machinery of mediation could have been established. It was in truth mediation itself that they dreaded. They were the champions of force and violence against law and arbitration.

For many years the better feeling of Europe had been working to establish a system by which the conflicts of the nations could be referred to arbitration; this could take many forms—an appeal to the permanent tribunal of The Hague, a formal conference of the Great Powers, a friendly discussion. Their act was a formal challenge to this ideal, and a reassertion of their faith in the older method of settling political controversy.

It is of no use to say that there was in Russia a war party, and that during the discussions of the week the war party got the upper hand. No doubt there was such a party. In every great military monarchy there will always be found men whose natural character and personal ambition inclines them to look with favour on war. There was doubtless a war party in Russia, as there was in Germany, and as there is in nearly every country of Europe. But this is one of the factors with which statesmen have to deal, and a statesman who wishes to preserve peace will avoid, if possible, all actions which will strengthen the hands of those inclined to war in the Councils of other States. It was known that the Czar was personally, above all other rulers in Europe, identified with the cause of peace. The inevitable result of German diplomacy was to strengthen the hands of those who differed from him in this, and we cannot doubt that the German Government in taking the action they did, were well aware that this must be the result.

And indeed how transparent is the subterfuge; the whole action represents one of the stalest and most stereotyped moves in diplomacy. To make a demand which you know injures in a vital point the interests of a neighbouring State; to persist in this unfriendly course of action until the other State, in order to make its protest heard, begins to mobilise, and then to declare that you are driven to war by the unprovoked threat of your opponent—who could suppose that Europe would be deceived by such a course?

CHAPTER XIII

DECLARATION OF WAR ON FRANCE

THE declaration of war against Russia necessarily brought with it war with France. The terms of the alliance between the two countries have not been published, but it had been framed precisely to provide against a contingency such as the present. No one suggests that France desired war; it would, however, have been impossible for her not to remain faithful to her ally. If we leave out of account all questions of honour and the obligation to abide by a solemn undertaking which had now existed for nearly twenty years, the simplest dictates of prudence and self-preservation would have rendered any such course impossible. Had France allowed herself to be separated from Russia, and had she consented to throw her influence against the Russian claim to have a voice in the settlement of the Serbian difficulty, peace indeed would probably have been preserved, but the result would have been that the alliance would have been broken, France would have been left isolated on the continent of Europe, and at any moment she would henceforward have been subjected to a threat from Germany similar to that now directed against Russia. Standing alone she would have been in no position to oppose it and she would have henceforward been condemned to follow whatever course Germany chose to dictate.

When the crisis began the President of the Republic was absent on a series of visits to the northern Courts. He was accompanied by M. René Viviani, who was both President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs. They had left St. Petersburg on July 23rd, the very day on which the Austrian Note was presented, but were not to return home for a fortnight. The news which reached them at Stockholm on the 26th, however, caused them to return to France with the greatest speed. The

Government was thereby absent during the first critical days, and it was impossible for France under these conditions to take so active and individual a part in the discussions as she would otherwise have done. The Acting Minister strongly supported the various proposals for mediation and discussion whether they came from St. Petersburg or London, and the Ambassadors acted in close association with their colleagues in the same direction. That they did not themselves initiate proposals is due to the absence of the heads of the Government.¹

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During their absence the President and the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been kept as fully informed as was in the circumstances possible about the progress of events; and the despatches sent to them from Paris afford us day by day an illuminating résumé of the situation. While at sea, M. Viviani had approved and supported the various efforts made to bring about an agreement.

ON BOARD THE *La France*.

I have received from Copenhagen your telegram summarising the events of Saturday; the telegram describing the last visit of the German Ambassador; that relating to the mediation which Russia advises Serbia to ask for and to the English *démarches* at Berlin, as well as your telegram received this morning directly through the Eiffel Tower.

I fully approve the reply which you made to Baron von Schoen; the proposition which you maintained is self-evident; in the search for a peaceful solution of the dispute, we are fully in agreement with Russia, who is not responsible for the present situation, and has not taken any measure whatever which could arouse the least suspicion; but it is plain that Germany on her side would find it difficult to refuse to give advice to the Austro-Hungarian Government, whose action has provoked the crisis.

We must now continue to use the same language to the

¹ The German Chancellor has had the effrontery to state that France made no active effort for peace. The accusation is not true as the previous record of negotiations will have shown. If they did not do more the cause is obvious. It was the Austrians who chose as the date for delivering the Note the day on which M. Poincaré left St. Petersburg.

German Ambassador. Besides, this advice is in harmony with the two English proposals mentioned in your telegram. I entirely approve the combination suggested by Sir E. Grey, and I am myself requesting M. Paul Cambon to inform him of this. It is essential that it should be known at Berlin and at Vienna that our full concurrence is given to the efforts which the British Government is making with a view to seeking a solution of the Austro-Serbian dispute. The action of the four less interested Powers cannot, for the reasons given above, be exerted only at Vienna and St. Petersburg. In proposing to exert it also at Belgrade, which means, in fact, between Vienna and Belgrade, Sir E. Grey grasps the logic of the situation; and, in not excluding St. Petersburg, he offers on the other hand to Germany, a method of withdrawing with perfect dignity from the *démarche* by which the German Government have caused it to be known at Paris and at London that the affair was looked upon by them as purely Austro-Serbian and without any general character.

Please communicate the present telegram to our representatives with the Great Powers and to our Minister at Belgrade.¹

The President reached Paris soon after midday on Wednesday. He was warmly welcomed, but while there was much excitement and apprehension there was little of that warlike enthusiasm of which Paris has in the past so often been the scene; and less than there was at Berlin. Determination and resignation, this seems to have been the attitude of the nation; loyalty to their allies and a resolution to meet with courage the terrible danger that had been pending over them; for France knew that whatever might be the fate of other nations, for her it was her existence that was at stake.

No sooner had he returned to Paris than his very first act was to telegraph to London pressing Sir Edward Grey to renew and continue his suggestions for mediation.

I should be obliged if you would ask Sir E. Grey to be good enough to renew as soon as possible at Berlin, in the form which he may consider most opportune and effective, his proposal of mediation by the four Powers, which had in principle obtained the adherence of the German Government.

The Russian Government on their side will have expressed the same desire directly to the British Government; the declaration of war by Austria on Serbia, her sending of troops

¹ F. 76.

M. René Viviani,
July 29.

to the Austro-Russian frontier, the consequent Russian mobilisation on the Galician frontier have in fact put an end to the direct Austro-Russian conversations.

The explanations which the German Government are going to ask for at Vienna, in accordance with the statement of Baron von Schoen which I have reported to you, in order to learn the intention of the Austrian Government, will allow the four Powers to exercise effective action between Vienna and St. Petersburg for the maintenance of peace.

I would ask you also to point out to the English Secretary of State how important it would be for him to obtain from the Italian Government the most whole-hearted continuance of their support in co-operating in the action of the four Powers in favour of peace.¹

He also saw the Russian Ambassador and assured him that France would remain faithful to Russia.

Viviani has just confirmed to me the French Government's firm determination to act in concert with Russia. This determination is upheld by all classes of society and by the political parties, including the Radical Socialists who have just addressed a resolution to the Government expressing the absolute confidence and the patriotic sentiment of their party. . . . He added that France sincerely desired peace, but that she was determined at the same time to act in complete harmony with her allies and friends, and that he, Baron von Schoen, might have convinced himself that this determination met with the warmest approval of the country.²

M. Isvolsky,
July 29.

This was on Wednesday, and in acknowledging it M. Sazonof telegraphed to M. Isvolsky :

The German Ambassador to-day informed me of the decision of his Government to mobilise, if Russia did not stop her military preparations. Now, in point of fact, we only began these preparations in consequence of the mobilisation already undertaken by Austria, and owing to her evident unwillingness to accept any means of arriving at a peaceful settlement of her dispute with Serbia.

M. Sazonof,
July 29.

As we cannot comply with the wishes of Germany, we have no alternative but to hasten on our own military preparations and to assume that war is probably inevitable. Please inform the French Government of this, and add that we are sincerely grateful to them for the declaration which the French Ambassador

¹ F. 97.

² R. 55.

made to me on their behalf, to the effect that we could count fully upon the assistance of our ally, France. In the existing circumstances, that declaration is especially valuable to us.¹

The French, while assuring Russia that they would be faithful to their alliance, did not omit to urge on the Russian Government the necessity for great caution in avoiding any act that could reasonably be interpreted as a provocation of Germany.

M. Isvolsky came to-night to tell me that the German Ambassador has notified M. Sazonof of the decision of his Government to mobilise the army if Russia does not cease military preparations.
M. René Viviani, July 30.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czar points out that these preparations were only commenced after Austria had mobilised eight army corps and had refused to arrange peacefully her differences with Serbia. M. Sazonof declares that in these circumstances Russia can only expedite her arming and consider war as imminent, that she counts on the help of France as an ally, and that she considers it desirable that England should join Russia and France without loss of time.

France is resolved to fulfil all the obligations of her alliance.

She will not neglect, however, any effort towards a solution of the conflict in the interests of universal peace. The conversation entered into between the Powers which are less directly interested still allows of the hope that peace may be preserved; I therefore think it would be well that, in taking any precautionary measures of defence which Russia thinks must go on, she should not immediately take any step which may offer to Germany a pretext for a total or partial mobilisation of her forces.²

The duty of the French Government was passive; they had no immediate part in the quarrel; they contented themselves with giving the fullest and most energetic support to all the proposals for mediation whether they came from Great Britain or from Russia, while at the same time, they scrupulously guarded themselves against any act which could be reasonably interpreted as a provocation of Germany.

Common prudence indeed required that all preliminary measures should be begun so that they should not be taken unawares if, notwithstanding their efforts, war ensued. Officers

¹ R. 58.

² F. 101.

on leave began to be recalled apparently on Monday, the 27th.¹ Manœuvres which were in progress were stopped and the necessary steps were taken to guard the frontier. Information was constantly coming to the French Government of great activity on the German side of the frontier.

On Wednesday and Thursday the German Government professed to be disturbed by the news of French military preparations. Herr von Jagow said to Sir E. Goschen that "he was much disturbed by certain military measures which he did not specify being taken by France. He subsequently spoke of these measures to my French colleague, who informed him that French Government had done nothing more than the German Government had done, namely, recalled officers on leave. His Excellency denied German Government had done this, but as a matter of fact it is true."

The White Book says that on the 29th further news was received of rapidly progressing military preparations of France, both on water and on land.

Some conversation on this matter took place next day with the German Ambassador.

Yesterday in the late afternoon the German Ambassador came and spoke to me of the military measures which the Government of the Republic were taking, adding that France was
M. René Viviani, able to act in this way, but that in Germany pre-
July 30. parations could not be secret, and that French opinion should not be alarmed if Germany decided on them.

¹ The date is given on the authority of documents which, according to the statement in German papers, were discovered after the occupation of Brussels at the English Legation.

One of these is to the following effect :

Information.

(1) French Officers received orders to rejoin from the afternoon of the 27th.

(2) On the same day the Station Master at Feignis received orders to collect at Mauberges all the closed railway trucks available for the transport of troops.

Communicated by the brigade of gendarmeries of Frameries.

This is published in the *North German Gazette* of December 15th. There is nothing in it inconsistent with the statements made by the French Government.

I answered that the French Government had not taken any step which could give their neighbours any cause for disquietude, and that their wish to lend themselves to any negotiations for the purpose of maintaining peace could not be doubted.¹

France was, of course, making preparations, those preparatory measures which were necessary in order to make mobilisation possible in a short time if it was required. The French army was not in so high a state of preparation as the German. As to the German measures, there is no doubt that during the week the whole forces on the frontier were put on a war footing.

On Thursday a full statement of the situation as regards military preparations on both sides of the frontier was communicated to the British Government.

PARIS.

Please inform Sir E. Grey of the following facts concerning French and German military preparations. England will see from this that if France is resolved, it is not she
 M. René Viviani, July 30. who is taking aggressive steps.

You will direct the attention of Sir E. Grey to the decision taken by the Council of Ministers this morning; although Germany has made her covering dispositions a few hundred metres from the frontier along the whole front from Luxemburg to the Vosges, and has transported her covering troops to their war positions, we have kept our troops ten kilometres from the frontier and forbidden them to approach nearer.

Our plan, conceived in the spirit of the offensive, provided, however, that the fighting positions of our covering troops should be as near to the frontier as possible. By leaving a strip of territory undefended against sudden aggression of the enemy, the Government of the Republic hopes to prove that France does not bear, any more than Russia, the responsibility for the attack.

In order to be convinced of this it is sufficient to compare the steps taken on the two sides of our frontier; in France, soldiers who were on leave were not recalled until we were certain that Germany had done so five days before.

In Germany, not only have the garrison troops of Metz been pushed up to the frontier, but they have been reinforced by units transported by train from garrisons of the interior such as Treves or Cologne; nothing like this has been done in France.

The arming of positions on the frontier (clearing of trees, placing of armament, construction of batteries and protection of railway junctions) was begun in Germany on Saturday, the

¹ F. 101.

25th; with us it is going to be begun, for France can no longer refrain from taking similar measures.

The railway stations were occupied by the military in Germany on Saturday, the 25th; in France on Tuesday, the 28th.

Finally, in Germany the reservists by tens of thousands have been recalled by individual summons, those living abroad (the classes of 1903 to 1911) have been recalled, the officers of reserve have been summoned; in the interior the roads are closed, motor-cars only circulate with permits. It is the last stage before mobilisation. None of these measures have been taken in France.

The German army has its outposts on our frontier; on two occasions yesterday German patrols penetrated our territory. The whole 16th Army Corps from Metz, reinforced by part of the 8th from Treves and Cologne, occupies the frontier from Metz to Luxemburg; the 15th Army Corps from Strassburg is massed on the frontier.

Under penalty of being shot, the inhabitants of the annexed parts of Alsace-Lorraine are forbidden to cross the frontier.¹

On Friday news of a most serious kind came from Luxemburg.

The Minister of State has just left the Legation, he has just told me that the Germans have closed the bridges over the Moselle at Schengen and at Remich with vehicles and the bridge at Wormeldange with ropes. The bridges at Wasserbillig and at D'Echternach over the Sûre have not been closed, but the Germans no longer allow the export from Prussia of corn, cattle, or motor-cars, and already fears were entertained that the territory of the Grand Duchy, which was like Belgium, a neutral State, might be invaded.

M. Eyschen requested me—and this was the real object of his visit—to ask you for an official declaration to the effect that France will, in the case of war, respect the neutrality of Luxemburg. When I asked him if he had received a similar declaration from the German Government, he told me that he was going to the German Minister to get the same declaration.

Postscript.—Up to the present no special measure has been taken by the Cabinet of Luxemburg. M. Eyschen has returned from the German Legation. He complained of the measures showing suspicion which were taken against a neutral neighbour. The Minister of State has asked the German Minister for an official declaration from his Government undertaking to respect the neutrality. Herr von Buch is stated to have replied, "That is a matter of course, but it would be necessary for the French Government to give the same undertaking."²

¹ F. 106. Cf. E. 105 (3).

² F. 111.

II

Up till Friday no further communications seem to have taken place between Germany and France as to this matter, but the presentation of the ultimatum to Russia was at once followed by serious steps taken towards France, and on this day the following instructions were sent to Baron von Schoen.

Russia has ordered mobilisation of her entire army and fleet, therefore also against us in spite of our still pending mediation.

Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg,
July 31. We have therefore declared the threatening state of war which is bound to be followed by mobilisation unless Russia stops within twelve hours all measures of war against us and Austria. Mobilisation inevitably implies war. Please ask French Government whether it intends to remain neutral in Russo-German war. Reply must be made in eighteen hours. Wire at once hour of inquiry. Utmost speed necessary.¹

The German Government decided at midday to take all military measures implied by the state called "state of danger of war."

M. René Viviani,
July 31. In communicating this decision to me at seven o'clock this evening, Baron von Schoen added that the Government required at the same time that Russia should demobilise. If the Russian Government has not given a satisfactory reply within twelve hours Germany will mobilise in her turn.

I replied to the German Ambassador that I had no information at all about an alleged total mobilisation of the Russian army and navy which the German Government invoked as the reason for the new military measures which they are taking to-day.

Baron von Schoen finally asked me, in the name of his Government, what the attitude of France would be in case of war between Germany and Russia. He told me that he would come for my reply to-morrow (Saturday) at one o'clock.

I have no intention of making any statement to him on this subject, and I shall confine myself to telling him that France will have regard to her interests. The Government of the Republic need not indeed give any account of her intentions except to her ally.

I ask you to inform M. Sazonof of this immediately. As I have already told you, I have no doubt that the Imperial Government, in the highest interests of peace, will do everything on their part to avoid anything that might render inevitable or precipitate the crisis.²

¹ G. 25.

² F. 117.

At seven o'clock this evening I was sent for by Minister for Foreign Affairs. When I arrived the German Ambassador was leaving His Excellency.

Sir F. Bertie,
July 31.

German Ambassador had informed His Excellency that, in view of the fact that orders had been given for the total mobilisation of Russian army and fleet, German Government have in an ultimatum which they have addressed to the Russian Government required that Russian forces should be demobilised.

The German Government will consider it necessary to order the total mobilisation of the German army on the Russian and French frontiers if within twelve hours the Russian Government do not give an undertaking to comply with German demand.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs asks me to communicate this to you, and inquires what, in these circumstances, will be the attitude of England.

German Ambassador could not say when the twelve hours terminates. He is going to call at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to-morrow (Saturday) at one p.m. in order to receive the French Government's answer as to the attitude they will adopt in the circumstances.

He intimated the possibility of his requiring his passports.

I am informed by the Russian Ambassador that he is not aware of any general mobilisation of the Russian forces having taken place.¹

The attitude of Germany proves that she wishes for war. And she wishes for it against France. Yesterday when Herr von

Schoen came to the Quai d'Orsay to ask what
M. René Viviani,
August 1.

attitude France proposed to take in case of a Russo-German conflict, the German Ambassador, although there has been no direct dispute between France and Germany, and although from the beginning of the crisis we have used all our efforts for a peaceful solution and are still continuing to do so, added that he asked me to present his respects and thanks to the President of the Republic, and asked that we would be good enough to make arrangements as to him personally (*des dispositions pour sa propre personne*); we know also that he has already put the archives of the Embassy in safety. This attitude of breaking off diplomatic relations without any direct dispute, and although he has not received any definitely negative answer, is characteristic of the determination of Germany to make war against France. The want of sincerity in her peaceful protestations is shown by the rupture which she is forcing upon Europe at a time when Austria had at last agreed with Russia to begin negotiations.²

¹ E. 117.

² F. 120.

Baron von Schoen came to see M. Viviani again next morning at eleven o'clock: the conversation turned chiefly on the last attempts at a settlement, as to which the German Ambassador professed himself ignorant. "He had not received any fresh instructions from his Government, and he was going to get information."

Baron von Schoen did not allude to his immediate departure, and did not make any fresh request for an answer to his question concerning the attitude of France in case of an
M. René Viviani,
August 1. Austro-Russian conflict. He confined himself to saying of his own accord that the attitude of France was not doubtful.

It would not do to exaggerate the possibilities which may result from my conversation with the German Ambassador for, on their side, the Imperial Government continue the most dangerous preparations on our frontier. However, we must not neglect the possibilities, and we should not cease to work towards an agreement. On her side France is taking all military measures required for protection against too great an advance in German military preparations. She considers that her attempts at solution will only have a chance of success so far as it is felt that she will be ready and resolute if the conflict is forced on her.¹

He came again at one o'clock, and telegraphed to Berlin "upon my repeated definite inquiry whether France would remain neutral in the event of a Russo-German war, the Prime Minister declared that France would do that which her interests dictated."²

It is remarkable that no steps seem to have been taken by the German Government in consequence of the refusal of the French to give a direct answer to the inquiry as to their neutrality. The plans of the German General Staff made it essential that as soon as war was begun an immediate attack in force should be directed against France, and for this reason it was obviously desirable that no delay should be allowed in declaring war. We should, therefore, have expected that the Germans would have at once taken this step, basing it on the ground that France refused to give an undertaking to remain neutral. This, however, was not done.³

¹ F. 125.

² G. 27.

³ This was probably due to the negotiations with Great Britain which were proceeding.

The French mobilisation was ordered shortly before four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and at the same time a despatch was sent to London explaining and justifying the reasons for this step.

President of the Republic has informed me that German Government were trying to saddle Russia with the responsibility; that it was only after a decree of general mobilisation had been issued in Austria that the Emperor of Russia ordered a general mobilisation; that, although the measures which the German Government have already taken are in effect a general mobilisation, they are not so designated; that a French general mobilisation will become necessary in self-defence, and that France is already forty-eight hours behind Germany as regards German military preparations; that the French troops have orders not to go nearer to the German frontier than a distance of 10 kilometres so as to avoid any grounds for accusations of provocation to Germany, whereas the German troops, on the other hand, are actually on the French frontier and have made incursions on it; that, notwithstanding mobilisations, the Emperor of Russia has expressed himself ready to continue his conversations with the German Ambassador with a view to preserving the peace; that French Government, whose wishes are markedly pacific, sincerely desire the preservation of peace and do not quite despair, even now, of its being possible to avoid war.¹

Minister of War informed military attaché this afternoon that orders had been given at 3.40 for a general mobilisation of the French army. This became necessary because the Minister of War knows that, under the system of "Kriegszustand," the Germans have called up six classes. Three classes are sufficient to bring their covering troops up to war strength, the remaining three being the reserve. This, he says, being tantamount to mobilisation, is mobilisation under another name.

The French forces on the frontier have opposed to them eight army corps on a war footing, and an attack is expected at any moment. It is therefore of the utmost importance to guard against this. A zone of 10 kilometres has been left between the French troops and German frontier. The French troops will not attack, and the Minister of War is anxious that it should be explained that this act of mobilisation is one for purely defensive purposes.²

¹ E. 134.

² E. 136.

III

The next day the Germans began the offensive by the occupation of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.

I have the honour to bring to Your Excellency's notice the following facts:

M. Eyschen,
August 2.

On Sunday, the 2nd of August, very early, German troops, according to the information which has up to now reached the Grand Ducal Government, penetrated into Luxemburg territory by the bridges of Wasserbillig and Remich, and proceeded especially towards the south and in the direction of Luxemburg, the capital of the Grand Duchy. A certain number of armoured trains with troops and ammunition have been sent along the railway line from Wasserbillig to Luxemburg, where their arrival is immediately expected. These occurrences constitute acts which are manifestly contrary to the neutrality of the Grand Duchy as guaranteed by the Treaty of London of 1867. The Luxemburg Government have not failed to address an energetic protest against this aggression to the representatives of His Majesty the German Emperor at Luxemburg. An identical protest will be sent by telegraph to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Berlin.¹

This action was a flagrant violation of treaties, and in itself was a definitely hostile act against France. It is from this moment that peaceful discussions between the two countries give place to definite military operations. The German excuses and explanations, though they are sufficient reason why this act was committed, are no justification for it.

The following Note was sent by the German Ambassador to the Minister for Foreign Affairs:

The German Ambassador has just been instructed, and hastens to inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the military measures taken by Germany in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg do not constitute an act of hostility. They must be considered as purely preventive measures taken for the protection of the railways, which, under the treaties between Germany and the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, are under German administration.²

During the course of the day information came of several

¹ F. 131.

² F. 133.

other hostile acts. A formal protest was at once directed to the German Government.

German troops having to-day violated the eastern frontier at several points I request you immediately to protest in writing to the German Government. You will be good enough
 M. René Viviani,
 August 2. to take as your text the following Note which, in the uncertainty of communications between Paris and Berlin, I have addressed directly to the German Ambassador:

“The French administrative and military authorities in the eastern district have just reported several acts which I have instructed the Ambassador of the Republic at Berlin to bring to the knowledge of the Imperial Government.

The first has taken place at Delle in the district of Belfort; on two occasions the French Customs station in this locality has been fired upon by a detachment of German soldiers. North of Delle two German patrols of the 5th Mounted Jaegers crossed the frontier this morning and advanced to the villages of Joncherey and Baron, more than ten kilometres from the frontier. The officer who commanded the first has blown out the brains of a French soldier. The German cavalry carried off some horses which the French mayor of Suarce was collecting, and forced the inhabitants of the commune to lead the said horses.

The Ambassador of the Republic at Berlin has been instructed to make a formal protest to the Imperial Government against acts which form a flagrant violation of the frontier by German troops in arms, and which are not justified by anything in the present situation. The Government of the Republic can only leave to the Imperial Government the entire responsibility for these acts.¹

It is always difficult to know what importance to assign in a state of great tension to violations of the frontier of this nature. In many cases they may have no great significance; they may be due merely to the carelessness or disobedience to orders of a patrol of cavalry, or want of discretion of some officer in charge of the frontier base. It was in order to guard against such incidents that the French were keeping their forces at some distance from the frontier. The French statements are so precise and detailed that it is difficult to refuse credence to them, and they seem to show on the part of the Germans, if not a deliberate intention to advance in force, yet a violation of the frontier at so many points and in so pronounced a manner,

¹ F. 139.

that it can hardly be regarded as accidental. The German account is to the effect that in one case only had there been any violation of the frontier.¹

On Monday no answer seems to have been received to the French protest, and we have no record of any communication between the two States until late in the evening, when the German Ambassador presented himself at the Ministry in order to hand in the formal declaration of war.

The German administrative and military authorities have established a certain number of flagrantly hostile acts committed on German territory by French military aviators. Several of these have openly violated the neutrality of Belgium by flying over the territory of that country; one has attempted to destroy buildings near Wesel; others have been seen in the district of the Eifel, one has thrown bombs on the railway near Karlsruhe and Nuremberg.

I am instructed, and I have the honour to inform Your Excellency, that in the presence of these acts of aggression the German Empire considers itself in a state of war with France in consequence of the acts of this latter Power.²

The German Government seem to have been ill advised in the reason they selected for the declaration of war. Even supposing that the statements made were correct, to have attributed this importance to them seems unnecessary; to allege as they did, that the state of war has been brought about by the acts of France after their open and flagrant violation of Luxemburg neutrality, is absurd. The statement as to these hostile acts committed by France cannot, however, be accepted. The first is that the neutrality of Belgium has been violated by aviators flying over the territory of that country. With regard to this, it is sufficient to point out, that as France was not at war either with Belgium or with Germany, the presence of a French aviator over Belgian territory was not necessarily a violation of neutrality. The statement that aeroplanes had been seen in the district of

¹ The following Report was read by the Chancellor to the Reichstag on August 4th :

“Of the French complaint as to violation of the frontier on our part, there is only one which can be admitted. Contrary to express orders a patrol of the 14th Army Corps, apparently led by an officer, crossed the frontier on the 2nd. They have apparently been shot down; only one man has returned.”

² F. 147.

the Eifel is much too vague for it to have any great weight. Only two definite acts of hostility are alleged. The one is an attempt to destroy buildings near Wesel; the other that bombs have been thrown on to the railway near Karlsruhe and Nuremberg. Had these statements been true, it would have been possible to establish them in precise detail and to publish the facts in such a way that they could not be disregarded. But this attempt to destroy Wesel, in what did it consist? The statement in the Berlin newspaper was that the aeroplane had been shot down; if this was so, then we might expect to have some statement as to the fate of the aviator; as to the place where it descended; as to the nature of the machine. None are forthcoming, and as to these bombs *on the railway near Karlsruhe and Nuremberg*, we should wish to have more precise indication of the spot where the bombs had fallen; the statement as officially made is incomplete. Karlsruhe and Nuremberg are about 150 miles from one another—were the bombs thrown on one spot or on several? ¹

A French writer has investigated this matter still further.

We have wished to assure ourselves whether these facts have been reported with some precision in the German newspapers. We consulted five important newspapers, *Vorwaerts*, *Wiener Arbeiterzeitung*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Koelnische Zeitung*, *Muenchner Neueste Nachrichten*, from the end of July to the 5th of August. But first of all we noticed that there was no mention of the aeroplane which is said to have flown over Karlsruhe. For the rest the vagueness is the same as in the official Note. These incidents, which are said to be the determining cause of war, are reported in one line or two or three at most. *Never have the bombs left any trace.* One of these aeroplanes, that of Wesel, is said to have been brought down; one is told nothing as to the aviator. What has become of him or of the machine itself? Lastly, arrival in Germany is notified; after that nothing more is said to them. They are never seen to return to the place whence they came.

But there is something still more significant. We have been able to procure a paper published in Nuremberg, the *Frankischer Kurrier*. On the 2nd of August, the day on which the aeroplane is said to have thrown the bombs, there is not a word of the incident. It is on the 3rd that Nuremberg learns the news by telegram from Berlin identical with that published by other papers.

¹ It is not even clear whether the bombs were dropped from an airship or aeroplane. See p. 379.

Lastly, the *Koelnische Zeitung*, in the morning edition publishes a telegram from Munich to the following effect :

The Bavarian Ministry of War doubts the truth of the news announcing that aviators have been seen above the railway line from Nuremberg-Kitzingen and Nuremberg-Ansbach throwing bombs on to the railway.¹

I may add that though I have consulted a very large number of German collections of documents and histories of the war, in not a single one of them have I found any evidence substantiating and corroborating these statements.

There is no conclusion possible except that these attacks attributed to the French were fictitious. They were the mere repetition of some of the innumerable untrue rumours which always arise during the transition from peace to war.

The importance of the matter is the light it throws upon the discretion of the German Government. At the moment when they were embarking on a war, probably the greatest in the history of their country, they choose as justification for their action a pretext which would not bear a moment's investigation. The only object of this could be to attempt to create in Germany itself a mistaken view as to the cause and sequence of events. It is actions such as this which makes it impossible for us to attach the slightest importance to German pretence of sincerity or to believe any statement made by the German Government unless it is amply corroborated from other sources.

However, these statements served their purpose, and in every account of the events which has since then been circulated in Germany we are told these stories of the aeroplanes and the bombs. Needless to say the invasion of Luxemburg is omitted, and the full detailed and precise statements of the French Government as to German violation of the frontier are ignored. The German White Book, mendacious to the end, concludes with the words: "On the morning of the next day (August 2nd) France opened hostilities."²

¹ "Qui a voulu la guerre," par E. Denkheim et E. Denis, p. 51.

² It is only fair to add that Baron von Schoen has in a later statement explained that there were other cases of hostility committed by France, but he could not enumerate them as there was difficulty in deciphering the telegram. The telegram appears not yet to have been deciphered, and we are still in ignorance as to what these charges were.

These unfounded accusations against France will not dispose us to give much credence to the similar accusations brought against Russia. It will be remembered that the German Government seek to throw on Russia the blame for the final rupture, on the ground that Russian troops had violated the German frontier. Similar charges are made against France. We can check the latter and find that they are untrue. We cannot check those against Russia, but we are certainly justified in looking on them with grave suspicion.

APPENDIX

It is not possible to discuss in any detail the action of Italy which, of course, was of particular importance to France. It is sufficient to point out, that Italy had not been consulted by her allies concerning the Austro-Serbian dispute, and the contents of the Note had not been communicated in advance to the Italian Government.

The Marquis di San Giuliano has returned to Rome this evening, and I saw him immediately after his arrival. He spoke to me of the contents of the Austrian Note, and
M. Barrère,
July 27. formally assured me that he had not had any previous knowledge of it.

He knew, indeed, that this Note was to have a rigorous and forcible character; but he had not suspected that it could take such a form. I asked him if it was true that he had given at Vienna, as certain papers allege, an approval of the Austrian action and an assurance that Italy would fulfil her duties as an ally towards Austria. "In no way," the Minister replied: "we were not consulted; we were told nothing; it was not for us then to make any such communication to Vienna."¹

As will have been seen from the account of the negotiations, the Italian Government on all occasions loyally and warmly supported all the proposals for mediation made whether by Russia, France, or Great Britain.

When the ultimatum was despatched to Russia, the formal demand was made at Rome by the German Ambassador to ask what their attitude would be.

I went to see the Marquis di San Giuliano this morning at half-past eight, in order to get precise information from him as to the attitude of Italy in view of the provocative acts of Germany and the results which they may have.
M. Barrère,
August 1.

¹ F. 72.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs answered that he had seen the German Ambassador yesterday evening. Herr von Flotow had said to him that Germany had requested the Russian Government to suspend mobilisation, and the French Government to inform them as to their intentions; Germany had given France a time-limit of eighteen hours and Russia a time-limit of twelve hours.

Herr von Flotow as a result of this communication asked what were the intentions of the Italian Government.

The Marquis di San Giuliano answered that as the war undertaken by Austria was aggressive and did not fall within the purely defensive character of the Triple Alliance, particularly in view of the consequences which might result from it according to the declaration of the German Ambassador, Italy would not be able to take part in the war.¹

In conclusion, it will be interesting to quote the following passage from a very well-informed German writer, from which it will be seen that according to his statement the German Government have officially recognised that the action of Italy is not a breach of the Triple Alliance. This implies that they themselves recognise that the war against Russia was not defensive, but offensive on the part of the two German Powers. This is of course in complete and open contradiction to their own repeated statements that the cause of war was an attack by Russia.

At this moment we can only point out the historical fact that at the outbreak of the great war Italy did not consider the *casus fœderis* had been given for her, but remained neutral. The Triple Alliance has not been broken up by this attitude, and also has not been destroyed as the German Empire and Austria-Hungary have officially recognised the Italian interpretation of the clause in the alliance as incorrect.²

¹ F. 124.

² Reventlow, "Deutschlands auswärtige Politik," 1888-1914, second edition, p. 403.

PART II

CHAPTER XIV

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ENTENTE CORDIALE

UP to this time Great Britain had acted a secondary part. The quarrel was not one of hers, and not one in which she was directly interested; her only function had been to try and arrange an agreement between the opposing parties. We have now to explain how it was that she came to hold the part of a principal.

Ever since the death of Lord Palmerston, it had been an accepted principle of English politics that she should not take a prominent part in the affairs of the Continent of Europe. The settlement of the Italian and the German questions had indeed removed many of the causes which might have implicated her in Continental affairs; her eyes were directed to the remoter parts of the earth. For forty years it had seemed as though this attitude of self-abnegation would be preserved. Nothing but the strongest motives could have induced the nation to change what seemed to have become a settled and permanent principle of British policy, and to take again a leading and active part in a Continental war.

This is not the place for an examination of the great change which took place between the years 1900 to 1905; it is, however, necessary to point out what exactly was the position of Great Britain in the spring of 1914.

It can be considered under two headings, the relation to France and the relation to Germany.

The cordial and close understanding with France which had existed for about ten years had originated in a series of agreements, the immediate result of which was simply to remove by an amicable settlement a large number of differences, some of local, and some of more general importance, which had for long existed between the two countries. So far the result was a

negative one. Causes of quarrel were removed; amicable relations were established. If this settlement formed the basis for what was—if not in name, at least in practice—an alliance, the causes must be sought in the general position of Continental affairs.

The essential fact was the recognition that England could not permit the destruction of France. This was partly a matter of interest; to a large extent it was also what, for want of a better word, it is usual to call “sentiment.” But sentiment includes all those moral forces which probably influence policy much more than the crude consideration of material and pecuniary interest. At the bottom there was a feeling which may best be illustrated by a story from ancient history. It will be remembered that when the Thebans approached the Spartans to press upon them the complete destruction of Athens, the answer was given that Greece without Athens would be like a man who had lost one of his eyes. Europe without France would have lost one of her eyes, and there was a serious and pressing danger that France might be so crushed and weakened that she would cease as other countries have done, to hold her traditional place among the European States.

The relations to Germany are far too complicated a subject to be adequately treated in a short space. Some points must, however, be noticed. We may take as our text the words used by the German Chancellor in a speech to the Reichstag: “A nation of the greatness and great qualities of the Germans cannot be stifled in its free and peaceful development.” This is a thought, the constant repetition of which will be found in all German political writings and in the speeches of the leading statesmen. The truth of it all depends on what is meant by “free development.” If it meant the fullest freedom in commercial and intellectual activity, the fullest freedom in peaceful expansion of trade and manufacture, then it was threatened by none. There was no place on the face of the earth which did not bear witness to the great development of German activities.

If, however, it meant the development of political influence and territorial expansion, then the free development of Germany as of every other country must be limited by the influence and possessions of other civilised States. The world

in recent years has grown very small, and there were few places where political influence could be extended and territorial acquisitions made without arousing questions which would involve the interests of other States. Each one of these must necessarily give rise to discussion and negotiation ; in some cases they might indeed be quickly and easily settled ; in others might arouse prolonged and angry controversy ; in no case could it be expected that problems of this nature could be peacefully settled entirely according to the wishes of one of the parties. The very essence of peacefulness is compromise, and compromise is impossible without some sacrifice.

Recent developments in Germany had given unmistakable evidence of a spirit which seemed to insist that the development of Germany must be pursued regardless of the interests of other States, and if necessary, enforced by military strength. This could not fail to be a serious danger to what were often the vital interests of other nations ; for many of the objects of ambition which were publicly avowed in Germany were of this nature.

But this was not the dominant factor. Great Britain was well able to guard her own interests overseas. What was at issue was not any mere question of colonial policy. It was not the delimitation of interests and territory on the continent of Africa. It was not the question of the ownership of islands in the South Seas. It was not the respective parts to be taken by the two nations in the exploitation of China, nor was it the German project for the development of Mesopotamia. Each of these questions was local, of secondary importance, and each of them was easily capable of settlement by amicable arrangement, by conciliation, and if necessary by arbitration, just as the similar controversies which had existed with Russia and with France had been settled in this way. As a matter of fact at the time of the outbreak of war nearly all these outlying questions had either been definitely settled, or were the subject of negotiations which were on the point of bringing about a satisfactory issue in such a way as to show that there was no desire to put difficulties in the way of German expansion. It was not, as has been suggested, English jealousy of German commercial success. This might cause annoyance ; it might lead to ill-considered outbursts by journalists or public speakers, but the great mass of public opinion in England, and it is by public opinion that

England is governed, would never have allowed war to be begun for any such reason. After all, war is the destruction of commerce; it is on peace that it thrives, and the experience of the last years had shown that the trade and prosperity of England had increased side by side with that of Germany.

The fundamental cause of the estrangement between the two countries was something infinitely more serious than anything of this kind. No one whose eyes were not blinded could ignore the fact that there was arising on the other side of the North Sea a danger and a challenge of a kind to which this country had not been exposed for a hundred years. For fifteen years with unprecedented energy and skill the German Government had been occupied in building a great fleet which had already secured for her the position of the second naval Power in the world, and the increase of the fleet had been always accompanied by appeals to national enthusiasm and ambitions similar to those which two generations before had accompanied the growth of the Prussian army. The language of the authorised spokesmen of the Government left no possibility for doubt that one, if not the chief use, to which this fleet was to be put was that its weight should be thrown into any controversy with England on matters of colonial expansion. The unofficial spokesmen of the nation with no uncertain voice proclaimed that the object was even more than this: it was to wrest from England the sovereignty of the seas on which the whole security of the island and the Empire rested, but which they never ceased to proclaim was an insult to the civilised world. This threat and this challenge could not be ignored. Even if the German Government did not share the views of so many German subjects there could be no security that at any moment the party hostile to Great Britain might not gain the ascendancy in the councils of the Crown. Even if an attack upon the British Empire was not the sole original object with which the fleet was built, this was, at any rate, a possible result.

A challenge of this kind, even if it was only a possibility in the future, even if it was not an immediate danger, could not be ignored. For it must be remembered that the danger and the threat was one, not to any secondary or partial interest, but to the existence of the nation and the maintenance of the Empire. Issuing from an impregnable base this fleet would

be in a position to endanger the actual shores of England, and to destroy the trade on which the life of the people depended. It had been met in the only way which was possible, by a constant increase in the British fleet. Step by step with the growth of the German fleet new ships had been built by England, so that the relative strength of the two remained such that, so far as Germany alone was concerned, Great Britain could look, not without concern but without anxiety, to the future.

Had Germany and England been alone in the world this answer would have been sufficient. It had, however, to be taken into consideration that Germany might, by alliance or conquest, so increase her offensive resources as to make the situation in case of any difference one of great gravity. There were clear indications that a policy of this kind could not be left out of account.

There were three definite methods by which some such change might be brought about.

Firstly, the close understanding, almost amounting to an alliance, which had been established between Germany and Turkey, combined with other indications that Germany was attempting to establish for herself a position as protector of the Mohammedan world, seemed to show that there might possibly, under certain circumstances, be an attempt to stir up disaffection or rebellion among the Mohammedan subjects of England, and especially to make an attack upon the British occupation of Egypt.

Secondly, just as the growth of the German fleet was a potential menace to Great Britain in her Home waters, so the Austrian and Italian fleets might become a menace in the Mediterranean. It was on her naval strength in the Mediterranean that the intercourse of Great Britain with Egypt and India depended; this was the most vital spot in the links of Empire. It would of course have been possible for this country to maintain a fleet of such a size as to secure not only full immunity in the Home waters, but also safety in the Mediterranean. To do this, however, would have involved a very serious financial strain; a strain which would have been all the more felt because it would have withdrawn money which was urgently needed for those purposes of social reform with which at this time the nation was peculiarly occupied.

Again, any great increase of German influence in Western Europe which gave her the use of the coast of the North Sea would be a change peculiarly threatening for England. It matters not in what particular way this increase of power was brought about; the essential thing was that no British Government could for a moment acquiesce in the coast of Holland or of Belgium falling under German influence in such a way that the mouths of the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheldt could be used as a base of attack against Great Britain.

There were other possibilities which might be mentioned, but these are sufficient. It was a matter of common prudence to make arrangements in order to protect this country against the very serious dangers which would arise if any of these were realised. Now it will be noticed that all these three were matters in which the interests of Great Britain and of France were identical. France, like Great Britain, had become a great Mohammedan Power; the maintenance of an equilibrium in the Mediterranean was of vital interest to France with her great Colonies in Northern Africa; and lastly, any increase of German territory and influence on the western coast of Europe could only be brought about after a successful war against France. However the matter was looked upon it became therefore evident that it was an essential British interest to maintain the position of France as one of the Great Powers of Europe, and to prevent any diminution in her strength or position. In fact, a good understanding with France was the best safeguard for the future. This would enable Great Britain to reduce the size of her fleet in the Mediterranean just as in the China Seas, owing to the alliance with Japan, the Chinese squadron had been diminished—perhaps to a dangerous extent. A good understanding with France would therefore remove from the shoulders of the nation what might have become an almost intolerable financial burden. If at any time Germany adopted an aggressive policy, the danger would fall upon England and France alike. Their interests could not be separated; if either nation were weakened or crushed the other would suffer. It was therefore of supreme importance to each country to know that if in the future either of these possible dangers became real they could depend on mutual support.

These are the considerations, stronger than the will of any particular individual, overriding the special programme of any particular party, which made a close understanding between the two nations so long hostile to one another inevitable. They were doubtless the considerations in the minds of the statesmen in both countries who first brought about the understanding. The understanding, indeed, was merely the expression and recognition of the obvious facts of the international situation which could not be obscured.

But these facts had not lost any weight during the ten years between 1904 and 1914. In fact, from year to year their paramount importance had become more obvious. With relentless persistence the building of the German fleet had been continued. It had been accompanied by an increasing activity of the party whose policy was directed to a definite challenge of British maritime supremacy.

Throughout the correspondence it will be found that Sir Edward Grey insists again and again on the fact that in the days before the beginning of the war England's hands were free. She was not bound by any treaty; it was open to her to take whatever course she wished and whatever course was in her interests. It has been objected that this was not true; that she was in fact, though not in name, bound by her long agreement with France. There is a partial truth in this; she was indeed not free, but she was bound, not by any agreement with France, but by the fundamental facts which had brought about this agreement.

The understanding with France was not the cause, but the result of these conditions. They continued to exercise their full force; the relations with France were the public and overt expression of the facts; but the original facts which had brought about the understanding continued to govern the situation to such an extent that at any time, if the understanding had not already existed, it would have had to be created. The policy of the country was, in fact, not governed by the understanding with France, but by the facts out of which that had arisen, and this is true right up to the outbreak of war. Even had there been no antecedent agreement with France, it would have had to be improvised on the moment when war broke out.

This policy was entirely in accordance with English traditions. Much has been talked about the Balance of Power, and much has been said which will not stand criticism. It is not the case, as has been often repeated, that what is called the "Balance of Power," that is, a system in which the Powers on the Continent of Europe are divided into two hostile and nearly equal camps in such a way that England, by joining the one or the other, may gain a preponderating influence, is in itself an arrangement to which this country now or at any time in the past has looked with approval. The Balance of Power is not an end in itself, it is only the means to an end. It is not something desired for its own sake. It is rather a remedy for an evil. It is only used as a means of guarding against a particular danger which has in the past from time to time arisen. That danger is when a great continental Power attempts to gain a predominating position upon the western seaboard in such a way that the resources of Europe can be used in order to establish a similar predominance upon the sea.¹ Nothing is further from the truth than to suppose that British statesmen are consciously influenced by general abstract principles or historical analogies of this kind; and in this particular case the actual facts are very different from what they are often represented to be. It was not Great Britain who was responsible for the existence of the two hostile alliances. They had sprung up without her co-operation or advice at a time when she took no special interest in continental affairs. To some extent, indeed, it may be said that the alliance of France and Russia had been framed in opposition to Great Britain, which at that time was working in close friendship with Germany. It is not the case that British policy regarded with complacency and satisfaction an arrangement by which the Powers on the continent of Europe stood opposed to one another in two armed camps approximately equal to one another in strength, so that Great Britain could hold the balance by throwing her weight now on one side, now on the other. This system was, in truth, most inconvenient to her. It confined and checked her policy in innumerable ways; it threw on her

¹ The matter cannot be discussed fully in this place, but it is necessary to make a protest against the view which is often found even in English writers that the policy of the British Government was directed toward establishing a system of the Balance of Power.

responsibilities which she would gladly have avoided. Her real aim was rather to dissolve the system of alliances.

It is impossible to understand British policy except by concentrated attention on the immediate facts of the moment. The neglect of this has caused a misrepresentation which is very widespread. Language is often used which seems to imply that the British Government was influenced by deliberate adhesion to a general principle of policy termed the "Balance of Power." We find this, for instance, in a speech of Herr Bethmann-Hollweg: "When five years ago I was called to this place the Triple Entente stood opposed to the Triple Alliance, the work of England, destined to serve the well-known principle of the Balance of Power, *i.e.* translated into German, the principle of English policy which has been followed for centuries to turn against that Power which is strongest on the Continent."

The question may be raised why, under these circumstances, there had not been, as a matter of fact, some formal treaty binding the two Governments. It is perhaps too soon to give any definite answer to this question. There is, of course, the obvious consideration that the forms of British political life and the traditions of British policy are very averse from the conclusion of definite treaties by one party which would bind another party when it came into power. This, however, was not sufficient to prevent the conclusion of a treaty with Japan. The truer answer seems to be that a treaty had not been made because the time for it had not come; that would be when what was only a possible and contingent menace had become real and immediate. It was always possible that the danger would evaporate. No one could foresee what would be the fate of the Austrian Empire in the immediate future; the alliance with Italy was not firm and secure; the spirit of Germany might change. What was done was to establish between the two countries that state of amity which could at any moment be crystallised into a formal treaty as soon as the occasion for it was there. The understanding was, indeed, the precise expression of the truth of the situation. It arose from certain obvious causes; it would subsist as long as these causes remained, and it had in the loyalty and confidence of the two nations a basis as secure as any formal treaty could give. Had war been intended

or desired, a treaty would have been made. So long as there was any hope for peace it was better not made.

The history of the great coalitions in the past will illustrate this. It was not until overt acts of hostility had been committed that Great Britain joined in the great coalition against Louis XIV, or the Revolution, or Napoleon; now it was known to all the world that if the occasion arose a coalition would be formed similar to those to which similar situations had given rise in the past.

There is, indeed, one exception to this statement that the relations between the two countries were governed, not by any written document or agreement but by a recognition of their common aims and policy. On two occasions, in 1906 and in 1911, in both cases arising out of the Morocco entanglement, there was a clear prospect of the outbreak of war. As Sir Edward Grey explained fully in his speech of August 4th, the French Government on the first of these occasions represented that if a sudden crisis arose which would justify Great Britain in giving armed support to France, this support could not be given when the time came unless conversations had already taken place between naval and military experts. This naturally arose out of the conditions of modern warfare. In olden days, when campaigns lasted for many years, it was sufficient for the arrangements of co-operation between two allied States to be made after the declaration of war. In modern times it is essential, if they are to be effective, that they should be made beforehand. This was clearly explained by Sir Edward Grey:

The French said to me, and I think very reasonably: "If you think it possible that the public opinion of Great Britain might, should a sudden crisis arise, justify you in giving to France the armed support which you cannot promise in advance, you will not be able to give that support, even if you wish to give it, when the time comes unless some conversations have already taken place between naval and military experts." There was force in that. I agreed to it, and authorised those conversations to take place, but on the distinct understanding that nothing which passed between military or naval experts should bind either Government or restrict in any way their freedom to make a decision as to whether or not they would give that support when the time arose.¹

¹ Speech in the House of Commons, August 4, 1914.

A similar situation recurred in 1912, and then it was decided by the Cabinet that there ought to be a definite understanding on the matter put in writing. On this occasion the following letter was written :

From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be regarded as, an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.¹

As to the contents of these discussions of course nothing is known ; they belong to the sphere of purely military operations. We have, indeed, one interesting sidelight upon them. It was clear that any detailed arrangements for co-operation between the English and French armies in the north of France must take into consideration the possibility of a German advance through Belgium. If this took place then the whole plan of campaign would have to be altered, and in a special way the part assigned to a British contingent would be greatly influenced. It would be extremely probable that it might be desirable to disembark the British forces actually in Belgium, so

¹ E. 115 (Enclosure 1).

that they could hasten as quickly as possible to meet the German advance through that country; even if that did not happen, a British force landed in the north of France might have, at very short notice, to advance into Belgium in order to defend the independence of that country. For this reason these military conversations had also to include the consideration of a possible campaign in Belgium. We happen to have an interesting light on this aspect of the discussion. This is dealt with at length in the chapter on Belgian neutrality.

Statements have also been made, in some cases going into considerable detail, that conversations with Russia on co-operation in naval warfare were initiated during the spring of 1914, similar to those which had been carried on with France as to warfare on land and sea. As to the details of these, however, nothing definite is known. If they took place they would obviously be exactly on the same lines as those with France, and, just as these were, would be, not in the nature of an engagement binding Great Britain to an alliance with Russia, but in the nature of preliminary discussions as to the nature of operations if the political situation so developed as to make an alliance desirable.

The question has often been asked how it was that England found it easier to come to an understanding with Russia than with Germany. After all, Russia was the only Great Power with which Great Britain had been at war since 1815, and the political system of Russia had for long been the constant subject of the bitterest attacks in England; in no country had the treatment of the Jews and of Finland been so strongly resented, and there were still points of great importance in which British and Russian interests appeared to be opposed. The question is a fair one, for even Englishmen themselves probably are still filled with astonishment at the ease with which so great a change has been carried through, and it has not been effected without arousing many misgivings.

As to the second point, it is sufficient to say that so great is the English prejudice in favour of political liberty, that the alliance with Great Britain, if it is to continue beyond the immediate and temporary cause, must be a pledge and guarantee of freedom to the oppressed subjects of the Czar.

Apart from this the reasons of a more diplomatic nature

are instructive. It is quite true that there were and are and will continue to be many points of possible antagonism between the two Empires, more than naturally arise between this country and Germany. These are, however, in all cases local, concrete, definite; they are all therefore capable of settlement, as soon as there is present goodwill. When once settled, there is nothing to prevent close friendship existing between the two Empires. With Germany it has been just the opposite. With her there neither are nor have there ever been any serious points of conflict; such differences as there have been were, curiously enough, just settled or in the process of settlement when war broke out. It was, in fact, just because the opposition of the two nations sprang from no definite cause that it was so difficult to soften. A cause can be removed, an enmity which is without cause cannot be. The enmity of Germany was wide as the earth and deep as the sea. It was directed not to any special possessions of the British Empire, but to the existence of the Empire itself. For this reason no concession could appease it. It was an enmity which was its own cause. England might go to war with Russia about the status of Afghanistan or the Dardanelles, or Persia; but the war when ended would more or less settle the particular question out of which it arose, and leave the two Empires untouched in their other interests and possessions. War with Germany, whatever might be the occasion, would be a war of life and death, in which a blow would be directed against the very heart of the Empire, and defeat would entail its fall.

In conclusion it must be noted that the whole situation was perfectly clear not only to the diplomatists, but to every one at all conversant with affairs. There had been nothing of what is called secret diplomacy. The relations of the Triple Alliance to the Double Alliance, and of Great Britain to both, were known in all essentials to the whole world. The text of the alliance between Austria and Germany had been published many years before. Though that between Russia and France and that by which Italy adhered to the Triple Alliance had not been published, there was no secrecy as to the essential points. As to the British and French relations publicity was of the essence of the contract. In the absence of any specific written engage-

ment the sole guarantee for the effectiveness of the understanding was the cordial co-operation between the two countries. It had been ratified in the manner in which such understandings are ratified, by formal visits of the King and the President, and by popular demonstrations. This, in fact, no doubt introduced a certain element of danger. An engagement of honour between two nations which has to be interpreted at a moment of great national excitement by popular feeling is not a very safe guide. It requires a highly trained political instinct and coolness of judgment. The question whether on any occasion the *casus fœderis* had arisen would depend, not on the precisely formulated terms of a written agreement to be interpreted by trained diplomatists, but on the feeling and voice of the two nations. This obviously added greatly to the difficulties of the Allies and of other States, not least of those who might be inclined to challenge one of the two friendly nations ; for they would have beforehand to discern what conditions would be likely to cause the understanding to crystallise into an alliance. This is a difficulty essential to the political conditions of the modern world ; it is one of which the diplomatists in former years knew nothing : it requires from modern statesmen a quick intelligence and an appreciation of the great waves of popular feeling in other countries which forms a very severe test of their skill and ability.

CHAPTER XV

BRITISH INTERVENTION

I

As early as July 24th, immediately after the publication of the Austrian ultimatum, the Russian Government had made a strong bid for a declaration that they could rely on the support of Great Britain. In the conversation with Sir George Buchanan, which is quoted above, M. Sazonof said that he hoped that Great Britain would not fail to proclaim her solidarity with Russia and France. In this he was supported by the French Ambassador. "Both continued to press me for a declaration of complete solidarity of His Majesty's Government with French and Russian Governments. M. Sazonof said that we would sooner or later be dragged into war if it did break out; we should have rendered war more likely if we did not from the outset make common cause with his country and with France." On the next day he used similar language: "He did not believe that Germany really wanted war, but her attitude was decided by ours. If we took our stand firmly with France and Russia there would be no war. If we failed her now, rivers of blood would flow and we would in the end be dragged into war. . . . Unfortunately, Germany was convinced that she could count upon our neutrality."

M. Paléologue in his report says also :

Only an affirmation of the solidarity of the Triple Entente can prevent the Germanic Powers from accentuating their provocative attitude.¹

Sir George Buchanan refused to give the promise asked for :

I could not, of course, speak in the name of His Majesty's Government, but personally I saw no reason to expect any

¹ F. 47.

declaration of solidarity from His Majesty's Government that would entail an unconditional engagement on their part to support Russia and France by force of arms.

Sir G. Buchanan, July 24. Direct British interests in Serbia were nil, and a war on behalf of that country would never be sanctioned by British public opinion.

French Ambassador and M. Sazonof both continued to press me for a declaration of complete solidarity of His Majesty's Government with French and Russian Governments, and I therefore said that it seemed to me possible that you might perhaps be willing to make strong representations to both German and Austrian Governments, urging upon them that an attack upon Austria by Serbia would endanger the whole peace of Europe. Perhaps you might see your way to saying to them that such action on the part of Austria would probably mean Russian intervention, which would involve France and Germany, and that it would be difficult for Great Britain to keep out if the war were to become general.¹

Sir Edward Grey refused to give the promise asked for, and telegraphing to Sir George Buchanan the next day he said :

You spoke quite rightly in very difficult circumstances as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. I entirely approve what you said, and I cannot promise more on behalf of the Government.

I do not consider that public opinion here would or ought to sanction our going to war over a Serbian quarrel. If, however, war does take place, the development of other issues may draw us into it, and I am therefore anxious to prevent it.²

In a later conversation Sir George Buchanan reported this to M. Sazonof, and added "that you could not promise to do anything more, and that His Excellency was mistaken if he believed that the cause of peace would be promoted by our telling the German Government that they would have to deal with us as well as with Russia and France if they supported Austria by force of arms. Their attitude would merely be stiffened by such a menace, and we could only induce her to use her influence at Vienna to avert war by approaching her in the capacity of a friend who was anxious to preserve peace."³

An account of this conversation was conveyed to the French Government, and the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs said

¹ E. 6.

² E. 24.

³ E. 44.

that "he was grateful for the communication and quite appreciated the impossibility for His Majesty's Government to declare themselves 'solidaires' with Russia on a question between Austria and Serbia, which in its present condition is not one affecting England." ¹

The opinion held by M. Sazonof was represented from other sources and on other occasions.

On July 29th Sir Rennell Rodd telegraphs that the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Italy said that Germany was really anxious for good relations with ourselves; if she believed that Great Britain would act with Russia and France he thought it would have a great effect; and on July 30th the President of the French Republic said to Sir F. Bertie that he was "convinced that peace between the Powers is in the hands of Great Britain. If His Majesty's Government announced that England would come to the aid of France in the event of a conflict between France and Germany as a result of the present difference between Austria and Serbia, there would be no war, for Germany would at once modify her attitude."

Sir Edward Grey to the last maintained the view to which he had given expression. As late as Thursday, the 31st, he telegraphed to Sir F. Bertie:

I believe it to be quite untrue that our attitude has been a decisive factor in the situation. The German Government do not expect our neutrality.

Whatever force this criticism has depends on the assumption that Germany deliberately wished for war with Russia and with France, and had sought to bring this about on an occasion in which Great Britain had no immediate interest, and at a time when she would be unwilling to take part in a war. It loses all its force unless those who made it believed that the whole policy of Germany was deliberately aggressive. With this qualification the criticism is not without weight. There is much reason for believing that, if Germany had from the beginning believed that she would have to meet Great Britain, the critical situation would never have arisen. She chose her time when she believed that Great Britain was fully occupied with other matters and

¹ E. 59.

her hands were tied by internal difficulties. This belief was a natural one; they had taken special measures to inform themselves as to the condition of the Irish question; the trouble with the army coinciding with the immediate prospect of civil war would easily mislead men always so well-informed and always so incapable of giving its true value to their knowledge. It had been generally believed in Europe for some years that Great Britain would not take part in a war arising out of the Balkan difficulties; Sir Edward Grey had in fact himself let this be known; by this he had to some extent weakened the influence which, for instance, this country might have exercised on the Macedonian difficulty. This was one of the inevitable disadvantages arising from the strong desire to maintain peace, which was the chief motive throughout the country, and it cannot be doubted that from the beginning the German Government had, at any rate to a large extent, based their policy upon this view. Had this view not been held, it is probable that the Austrian Note would originally have been differently worded. On the other hand, it is very improbable that, after the Note had once been sent and the German approval of it given, the German Government would at any time have withdrawn from the position they had definitely and publicly taken up, because they thought that Great Britain might come in.

However this may be, it does not follow, as some writers have suggested, that Sir Edward Grey should have taken the course suggested, and from the beginning promised his support to Russia. It would, indeed, have been impossible for him to do so. Let us consider what would have happened had he acted in this manner. He could not have been sure that war would have been avoided; it is now at best a probability but not a certainty; then it was only a possibility. But had war none the less come about, in what a situation would he have been placed! How could he have come to the country and asked for their support in a war waged, as this would have appeared to be, in support of Serbia against Austria and in a matter with which this country had no interest? Even had the Cabinet supported him—and this it would not have done without losing many members—had he even secured a majority in the House of Commons, the opposition in the country to such a policy would have been so strong

and determined that the country could not have thrown its full strength into the war. How would it have been possible to appeal to men to serve in the army for a war undertaken in this manner? The country would have been divided and half-hearted; neither men nor the money would have been available, and inevitable disaster would have resulted.¹

And even had war been averted, the effect would have been disastrous. The truth could not have been concealed. More than ever would Germany have been convinced that England was her real enemy; the whole German nation would have been converted, in a way in which it never had been before, to the conviction that England was the jealous and persistent enemy whose hostility met her at every point of the world. The task of preparing for war with England, the direction of her whole diplomatic activity against her, and especially the building of the fleet, would have been carried on with redoubled energy, and in every part of the world her preparations for the organised attack upon us would have continued. Our defensive, however, would have been weakened, for the criticisms directed against the Entente with France and Russia would have gained in strength; Sir Edward Grey would have lost the confidence of the country, and it is only too probable that the whole structure built up by ten years of patient labour would have been overthrown. Then, when a favourable time occurred, it might have been in a few months, it might have been in a year or two, the attack would have come in some other form at a time when we were not prepared to meet it.

For these reasons the pledge and promise asked for by Russia, and at a later stage asked for by France, could not be given. None the less it was possible, and it was necessary to make plain to the German Government that they could not depend on the abstention of Great Britain. This must be done, but done in such a way as to avoid anything in the nature of a threat or anything that could interfere with the effectiveness of the proposals for mediation which were at this time being urgently pressed. Germany must be clearly warned of the dangers which she would incur, but the warning must be given with every con-

¹ It may be added that those who make this criticism would have been the first to censure his policy, had he adopted the course which they now suggest was the right one.

sideration. It was not possible to speak of the intentions of the Government, for these were not determined ; it was not possible to say that Great Britain under certain circumstances would go to war. There was no will for war ; on the contrary, on the part of the large majority of the Government there was a strong and compelling desire to keep peace. Sir Edward Grey could not say, " If there is war we will join in it." For this he had no authority. What he could do was, looking at the situation from the outside with his deep knowledge of the factors to be considered, to say that as a matter of fact if there were war it could be foreseen that Great Britain would inevitably, whether she wished it or not, be compelled to take part in it.

This distinction must be kept in mind. It explains why we do not find this point dealt with in the telegrams to Sir Edward Goschen during the earlier days of the negotiations. Anything in the nature of a statement by the British Ambassador to the German Government to this effect would have seriously impeded the work of mediation. It was his part to communicate to the German Government the intentions of the British Government ; it was the part of the German Ambassador at London to convey to them information as to the political situation in England. In this the British Government had every desire to be of assistance to him, for they had nothing which they wished to keep secret. There is no doubt that he was fully and correctly informed ; there is little doubt that he gave full information to his own Government. The misfortune was that his Government refused to believe all warning ; advice to them was wasted. They would not listen to the voice of reason ; they had other advisers to whom they gave more credit ; nothing was able to shake their self-sufficiency. That the warnings went far beyond what is recorded in the official English publication we can see by the sidelights provided from France. It was, for instance, convenient that he should learn the truth not only from Sir Edward Grey but also from the Permanent Secretary, who could speak more freely ; what he said could not be perverted into anything of the nature of a threat. That this means was used we learn from a despatch from the French Chargé d'Affaires :

The German Ambassador and the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador allow it to be understood that they are sure that England

would preserve neutrality if a conflict were to break out. Sir Arthur Nicolson has told me, however, that Prince Lichnowsky cannot, after the conversation which he has had with him to-day, entertain any doubt as to the freedom which the British Government intended to preserve of intervening in case they should judge it expedient.

The German Ambassador will not have failed to be struck with this declaration, but to make its weight felt in Germany and to avoid a conflict, it seems indispensable that the latter should be brought to believe for certain that they will find England and Russia by the side of France.

And on the same day the fact that the English fleet, which had been mobilised for manœuvres, was not being demobilised was made public and brought by Sir Edward Grey to the knowledge of the Austrian Ambassador.

But if the policy of this country has been criticised on the ground that no promise of support was given to Russia, it has been open to an attack of a similar nature from the other side. It has been represented that it was the duty of Sir Edward Grey to declare from the beginning that he would take no part in any war that might arise out of the Serbian question, and to give his adherence to the German formula that the matter was and must remain localised. Had England done this, had she dissociated herself from Russia and France, adopted the German conditions and declared that she would stand aloof, then, it is said, war would certainly have been averted. The conclusion is drawn that it is England who is responsible for the war which ensued ; it is in the later utterances maintained that she deliberately refrained from this action for the purpose of making war inevitable.

Now as to the fact. It is not even clear that had she acted in this way she would have prevented war. It is far more probable that the indignation aroused in Russia would still have been so strong as to make any wavering or hesitation impossible.

But supposing all this was true. How preposterous is the suggestion that Great Britain should have taken this course. Had she done so she would thereby have made herself a partner to that high-handed abuse of power, the prevention of which had brought her into close terms of friendship with two ancient enemies. She would have confirmed all that against which her policy for over ten years had been directed, and in

addition to this she would have earned the well-merited contempt of those with whom she was bound by close ties of friendship. Had it indeed been the case that the struggle had arisen from aggression by Russia, then, as was repeatedly made clear, she would have taken some such course, but the whole evidence available was that the action of Austria had been a definite and deliberate challenge to Russian policy and power. That it was so has been fully explained by Germany. It was a challenge, and it was also an unprovoked challenge. On what grounds, then, could she have asked Russia to submit to this? For the matter at stake was no small one; the success or Austria would have implied the final establishment of Austrian predominance throughout the western Balkans; it would have been the settlement of a long-standing struggle between the two Great Powers, and it would have put a final barrier to what, whether rightly or wrongly, was esteemed throughout Russia to be a matter of national importance.

We can imagine circumstances in which it would have been manifestly her duty to act in this way. Had the danger arisen by a manifest aggression on the part of the two allies; had France, in order to regain Alsace-Lorraine, tampered with the neutrality of Belgium; had Russia threatened the integrity or the independence of Sweden; had she openly supported an aggressive movement against the Slavonic provinces of Austria or menaced the independence of Roumania or Bulgaria, then Great Britain would necessarily have dissociated herself from the Double Alliance. That this was the case was well known; it was just for this reason that her influence was so strong in keeping peace. But this restraining and moderating influence would have ceased to be effective if it had been used not only to stop aggression on the part of Russia and France, but to drive them to submit to a humiliating acquiescence in face of a manifestly hostile action.

Between these two opposite dangers Sir Edward Grey with equal courage and skill steered a middle course, while at the same time he threw without reserve the whole of his influence, and it was very great, into the search for some method of preserving peace which would imply no humiliation to either Austria or Russia. It was a course which could not fail to be successful except on one contingency, that war was deliberately desired and

was preferred to an honourable peace. The offer of mediation was a test of policy.

It was not until this proposal had been made and rejected, and until thereby the two opposing Empires had shown their hand and it had become clear from which it was that European peace was endangered, that it was possible for Great Britain definitely to decide on the course of action she would take in any war which might ensue.

II

It was on Wednesday that the failure of the proposals for mediation had become apparent; it was on this day that Russia had begun to mobilise. It was becoming necessary that Sir Edward Grey should indicate in a more official form than he had hitherto done what would be the attitude of Great Britain supposing that war were to ensue. On the same day also the French President had returned to Paris, and he at once, as we have seen, gave his assurance to Russia that she might depend on the full co-operation and support of France. It was becoming a matter of the most serious and urgent importance that France should know what action Great Britain would take.

Sir Edward Grey therefore made a definite explanation on this point, first to the French and afterwards to the German Ambassadors. To the French Ambassador he gave the fullest and most authentic statement that we have as to the English point of view.

After telling M. Cambon to-day how grave the situation seemed to be, I told him that I meant to tell the German Ambassador to-day that he must not be misled by the friendly tone of our conversations into any sense of false security that we should stand aside if all the efforts to preserve the peace, which we were now making in common with Germany, failed. But I went on to say to M. Cambon that I thought it necessary to tell him also that public opinion here approached the present difficulty from a quite different point of view from that taken during the difficulty as to Morocco a few years ago. In the case of Morocco the dispute was one in which France was primarily interested, and in which it appeared that Germany, in an attempt to crush France, was fastening a quarrel on France on a question that was the subject of a special agreement between France and us. In the present case the dispute

Sir E. Grey to
Sir F. Bertie,
July 29.

between Austria and Serbia was not one in which we felt called to take a hand. Even if the question became one between Austria and Russia we should not feel called upon to take a hand in it. It would then be a question of the supremacy of Teuton or Slav—a struggle for supremacy in the Balkans; and our idea had always been to avoid being drawn into a war over a Balkan question. If Germany became involved and France became involved, we had not made up our minds what we should do; it was a case that we should have to consider. France would then have been drawn into a quarrel which was not hers, but in which, owing to her alliance, her honour and interest obliged her to engage. We were free from engagements, and we should have to decide what British interests required us to do. I thought it necessary to say that, because, as he knew, we were taking all precautions with regard to our fleet, and I was about to warn Prince Lichnowsky not to count on our standing aside, but it would not be fair that I should let M. Cambon be misled into supposing that this meant that we had decided what to do in a contingency that I still hoped might not arise.

M. Cambon said that I had explained the situation very clearly. He understood it to be that in a Balkan quarrel, and in a struggle for supremacy between Teuton and Slav, we should not feel called to intervene; should other issues be raised, and Germany and France become involved, so that the question became one of the hegemony of Europe, we should then decide what it was necessary for us to do. He seemed quite prepared for this announcement and made no criticism upon it.

He said French opinion was calm but decided. He anticipated a demand from Germany that France would be neutral while Germany attacked Russia. This assurance France, of course, could not give; she was bound to help Russia if Russia was attacked.¹

He saw Prince Lichnowsky shortly afterwards. It seems from a French account (F. 98) that Prince Lichnowsky had definitely asked what the intentions of the British Government were. Sir Edward Grey gives an account of this very important interview.

After speaking to the German Ambassador this afternoon about the European situation, I said that I wished to say to him, in a quite private and friendly way, something that was on my mind. The situation was very grave. While it was restricted to the issues at present actually involved we had no thought of interfering in it. But if Germany

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 29.

¹ E. 87.

became involved in it, and then France, the issue might be so great that it would involve all European interests; and I did not wish him to be misled by the friendly tone of our conversation—which I hoped would continue—into thinking that we should stand aside.

He said that he quite understood this, but he asked whether I meant that we should, under certain circumstances, intervene?

I replied that I did not wish to say that, or to use anything that was like a threat or an attempt to apply pressure by saying that, if things became worse, we should intervene. There would be no question of our intervening if Germany was not involved, or even if France was not involved. But we knew very well, that if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, we must intervene at once, and the decision would have to be very rapid, just as the decisions of other Powers had to be. I hoped that the friendly tone of our conversations would continue as at present, and that I should be able to keep as closely in touch with the German Government in working for peace. But if we failed in our efforts to keep the peace, and if the issue spread so that it involved practically every European interest, I did not wish to be open to any reproach from him that the friendly tone of all our conversations had misled him or his Government into supposing that we should not take action, and to the reproach that, if they had not been so misled, the course of things might have been different.

The German Ambassador took no exception to what I had said; indeed, he told me that it accorded with what he had already given in Berlin as his view of the situation.¹

We do not know when this answer was received at Berlin, whether before or after the meeting of the Council that evening, nor have we any authoritative information as to the effect which it had upon the German Government.

This conversation took place in the early afternoon. About midnight a telegram arrived at the Foreign Office from His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I was asked to call upon the Chancellor to-night. His Excellency had just returned from Potsdam.

He said that should Austria be attacked by
Sir E. Goschen,
July 29. Russia a European conflagration might, he feared, become inevitable, owing to Germany's obligations as Austria's ally, in spite of his continued efforts to maintain peace. He then proceeded to make the following strong bid for

¹ E. 89. No information as to this has been published in Germany.

British neutrality. He said that it was clear, so far as he was able to judge the main principle which governed British policy, that Great Britain would never stand by and allow France to be crushed in any conflict there might be. That, however, was not the object at which Germany aimed. Provided that neutrality of Great Britain were certain, every assurance would be given to the British Government that the Imperial Government aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France should they prove victorious in any war that might ensue.

I questioned His Excellency about the French colonies, and he said that he was unable to give a similar undertaking in that respect. As regards Holland, however, His Excellency said that so long as Germany's adversaries respected the integrity and neutrality of the Netherlands, Germany was ready to give His Majesty's Government an assurance that she would do likewise. It depended upon the action of France what operations Germany might be forced to enter upon in Belgium, but when the war was over, Belgian integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany.

His Excellency ended by saying that ever since he had been Chancellor the object of his policy had been, as you were aware, to bring about an understanding with England; he trusted that these assurances might form the basis of that understanding which he so much desired. He had in mind a general neutrality agreement between England and Germany, though it was of course at the present moment too early to discuss details, and an assurance of British neutrality in the conflict which present crisis might possibly produce, would enable him to look forward to realisation of his desire.

In reply to His Excellency's inquiry how I thought his request would appeal to you, I said that I did not think it probable that at this stage of events you would care to bind yourself to any course of action and that I was of opinion that you would desire to retain full liberty.¹

This proposal was, it will be recollected, made immediately after the important meeting of the Council at Potsdam. It was no secret preliminary feeler thrown out on his own authority by the Chancellor; it was the considered explanation of the whole policy of Germany towards Great Britain. Presumably it was put forward under the expectation that it would be accepted, for such a suggestion could not even be mentioned unless there were strong hopes that it might be effective. It was too compromising. The fact of its proposal under such circumstances

¹ E. 85. As to this also we have no help from Germany.

shows what appears throughout the whole of the negotiations, a complete incapacity on the part of the German Government to understand the point of view of other States.

For what in fact does the proposal come to? First of all as regards the form. It is not merely an inquiry as to what the attitude of Great Britain would be in the case of war, and a request to know whether she would remain neutral; against a request of this kind which had apparently been made already by Prince Lichnowsky no objection could have been taken. It was more than that; it was a suggestion that Great Britain should enter into a binding agreement that she would remain neutral—a very different thing. This point is discussed at greater length below. We may now turn to the actual material conditions offered. In effect they amount to nothing at all. First of all Germany proposes to reserve to herself a free hand to violate Belgian neutrality. In return for this the only concession offered is, firstly that if Belgium herself acquiesces in this breach of the Treaty of London, no Belgian territory would be annexed, and secondly, that if France is conquered, no French territory either will be annexed. The German Government was very ready to promise not to annex territory. As regards France, this offer was merely a promise not to do something which would be of no benefit to herself. Supposing France had been crushed and conquered, what benefit would Germany have gained by the annexation of any French territory? It would have brought her, not strength but weakness—that the experience in Alsace-Lorraine was sufficient to prove; even from the purely military point of view there was nothing, except perhaps Belfort, which she would have desired. She was therefore giving up something which was of no value to her and which she would not have taken even if Great Britain refused to enter into this agreement. It will be noted also that this promise would not have prevented her from offering to Italy, supposing Italy took part in the war as an ally of Germany, the provinces of Nice and Savoy, which had been annexed by France in 1861; it would also have left it open to Germany to arrange that Belgium, if she had subordinated herself to Germany, should receive as reward some increase of territory on the northern frontier of France.

On the other hand, all which was of real interest to England, the French colonies, the French fleet, French naval power, and

above all the maintenance of France in Europe as a Power of the first rank, was ignored.

As to Belgium, how insulting was the offer. It came to this; Germany offers as a concession not to annex Belgian territory on condition that Belgium will acquiesce in her violation of the treaty, that is, she threatens Belgium with loss of territory if she does not acquiesce in an action which she is bound by treaty to oppose.

I know nothing more damning to the reputation of German statesmanship than this offer. They were on the brink of a war against the two greatest nations in Europe. On the result of this war great things depended; it would probably determine for many generations to come the political status of the whole east of Europe, and on it would depend to a large extent the future of the German race itself. The event of the war probably depended on the action of Great Britain; if Great Britain stood out, they might reasonably expect an easy victory; if she came in, all would be at stake. Her neutrality was worth great sacrifices, and at this most critical stage of the whole proceedings they incorporate in the request for neutrality their avowed intention of attacking English interests in the two points in which she was most interested—Colonial development and Belgium. They make their requests for neutrality by proposals which would have been more in place in a declaration of war.

There could therefore be not a moment's hesitation as to the answer. It was despatched the next day.

His Majesty's Government cannot for a moment entertain the Chancellor's proposal that they should bind themselves to neutrality on such terms.

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
July 30.

What he asks us in effect is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies.

From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power, and become subordinate to German policy.

Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover.

The Chancellor also in effect asks us to bargain away whatever obligation or interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either.

Having said so much it is unnecessary to examine whether the prospect of a future general neutrality agreement between England and Germany offered positive advantages sufficient to compensate us for tying our hands now. We must preserve our full freedom to act as circumstances may seem to us to require in any such unfavourable and regrettable development of the present crisis as the Chancellor contemplates.¹

In conclusion Sir Edward Grey added the following :

You should speak to the Chancellor in the above sense, and add most earnestly that the one way of maintaining the good relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe; if we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object His Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and goodwill.

And I will say this: If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.

Here, then, we have the point of view of the two Governments clearly opposed; and as we know, the two policies were not the accidental and hasty improvisation of the moment, but the repetition of suggestions calmly and deliberately made at a less critical time. Both aimed at a permanent agreement: but how different was the basis on which they rested—the English agreement was for peace, the German was for war. The English assumed that Germany would abstain from aggression, and offered a guarantee that would remove apprehension that an

¹ E. 101.

unprovoked attack might come from the proposed alliance ; if accepted, it would remove mutual mistrust and be a permanent guarantee for the peace of Europe.

But what of the German proposal? It speaks not of peace but of neutrality ; but neutrality is of value only when there is war. It could mean nothing but this : that all Germany desired was a clear, full, and favourable opportunity for a forward move, for what they called the free development of Germany, which meant a campaign in great style on the power and interests of the other European States.

No answer was sent to Sir Edward Grey's despatch, and no notice seems to have been taken of the offer with which it concluded. From this time, however, the situation must have been clear to them. They knew that they could not depend upon British neutrality. The information which we have is not sufficient to enable us to judge whether the refusal of their offer, and the warning given the afternoon before to Prince Lichnowsky, had any influence at all. It is possible that in these two communications is to be found the explanation of a certain hesitation which, as we have pointed out above, seems to have influenced them during the course of Thursday. If there were any hesitation it lasted, however, for a very short time, and the warning failed in its object.¹

The reason probably is that the German Government believed, whatever Sir Edward Grey might say, that he would not have the support of his colleagues and of Parliament, and they have come to the conviction that Great Britain would not risk a war.

In truth, all warning and advice were thrown away upon them. Had they taken the warning as it was meant it would have been easy for them at this stage by a single word to have avoided war ; the whole machinery of mediation was at their disposal ; it was on this very day that Sir Edward Grey offered to accept any proposal that they might make. They would make none. They would not listen to Sir Edward Grey ; they ignored the repeated warnings of their own Ambassador, they preferred to trust to other advice ; they thought that they understood these things better themselves. They went on their way looking

¹ It is, however, very probable that it was British influence that helped to bring about the marked change which we find in the Austrian attitude at the end of the week.

neither to the right nor to the left, but straight towards war with the Double Alliance. Their action was that of men blinded to reason. And then when, a week later, the warnings were shown to have been true, when their miscalculation was proclaimed to all the world, with a flagrant disregard of the real facts they endeavoured to throw upon Great Britain the whole responsibility for what was the inevitable result of their own actions.

This exchange of telegrams left the relations of Great Britain and Germany in a very different state. Mutual confidence, which was the necessary condition to the success of Sir Edward Grey's mediation, had been broken and could not easily be resumed. On Thursday, in fact, we find that Prince Lichnowsky addressed to the British Government a request for information as to the meaning of British military preparations (F. 108), and on Friday he seems also to have made a formal inquiry whether Great Britain would remain neutral.

Sir E. Grey told me that Prince Lichnowsky had asked him this morning if England would observe neutrality in the conflict which is at hand. The Secretary of State
M. Paul Cambon,
 July 31. for Foreign Affairs replied that, if the conflict became general, England would not be able to remain neutral, and especially that if France were involved England would be drawn in.¹

I said that it was quite wrong to suppose that we had left Germany under the impression that we would not intervene. I had refused overtures to promise that we should remain neutral. I had not only definitely declined to say that we would remain neutral, I had even gone so far this morning as to say to the German Ambassador that, if France and Germany became involved in war, we should be drawn into it. That, of course, was not the same thing as taking an engagement to France, and I told M. Cambon of it only to show that we had not left Germany under the impression that we would stand aside.²

III

Meanwhile the French Government, watching as they did with concern the grave danger which was impending over their

¹ F. 10.

² E. 119.

country, began to urge Sir Edward Grey more strongly to give some definite pledge of support.

On Thursday the English Ambassador had an audience with the President of the Republic, who strongly urged that a declaration by England that she would eventually give her support to France and Russia was the surest means of preserving peace.

President of the Republic . . . is convinced that peace between the Powers is in the hands of Great Britain. If His Majesty's Government announced that England would come to the aid of France in the event of a conflict between France and Germany as a result of the present differences between Austria and Serbia, there would be no war, for Germany would at once modify her attitude.

Sir F. Bertie
July 30.

I explained to him how difficult it would be for His Majesty's Government to make such an announcement, but he said that he must maintain that it would be in the interests of peace. France, he said, is pacific. She does not desire war, and all that she has done at present is to make preparations for mobilisation so as not to be taken unawares. The French Government will keep His Majesty's Government informed of everything that may be done in that way. They have reliable information that the German troops are concentrated round Thionville and Metz ready for war. If there were a general war on the Continent it would inevitably draw England into it for the protection of her vital interests. A declaration now of her intention to support France, whose desire it is that peace should be maintained, would almost certainly prevent Germany from going to war.¹

M. Cambon now took a fresh and very important step. Referring to the exchange of letters as to military co-operation between the two nations, which has been quoted above, he made the definite request which had been contemplated in Sir Edward Grey's letter of 1912 that "if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third party, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common."

M. Cambon reminded me to-day of the letter I had written to him two years ago, in which we agreed that, if the peace of Europe

was seriously threatened, we would discuss what we were prepared to do. He said that the peace of Europe was never more seriously threatened than it was now. He did not wish to ask me to say directly that we would intervene, but he would like me to say what we should do if certain circumstances arose. The particular hypothesis he had in mind was an aggression by Germany on France. He gave me a paper, of which a copy is also enclosed, showing that the German military preparations were more advanced and more on the offensive upon the frontier than anything France had yet done. He anticipated that the aggression would take the form of either a demand that France should cease her preparations, or a demand that she should engage to remain neutral if there was war between Germany and Russia. Neither of these things could France admit.¹

Sir E. Grey to
Sir F. Bertie,
July 30.

As M. Cambon pointed out in his telegram home, it was no longer "a question of a conflict of influence between Russia and Austria-Hungary, but there is a risk of an act of aggression which might provoke general war. Sir Edward Grey understood my feelings perfectly, and he thinks as I do that the moment has come to consider and discuss together every hypothesis."²

This brought the question of what Great Britain must do to a definite issue, and Sir E. Grey promised to lay the matter before the Cabinet at their meeting on Friday morning. The Cabinet decided that it was not possible at this moment to authorise common measures of the kind suggested, and that they could not, as things stood, give the pledge of unconditional assistance and support to France which the French President and the Ambassador had asked for. This decision was conveyed by Sir Edward Grey in a despatch to Sir F. Bertie, and also in conversation to M. Cambon.

It is to be noticed that these two statements entirely agree with one another, and they are conclusive evidence that up to this period no resolution had been taken by the Government to intervene; it is quite impossible, as has been suggested even in official German statements, that Sir Edward Grey had before this given the Russian Government an assurance that they could depend upon British support. He could not have done this without the consent of the Cabinet, and had he done so he would clearly have exposed himself to having his action disavowed by his colleagues.

¹ E. 105.

² F. 108.

The conversation turned on two points. Firstly M. Cambon, as he had done before, pressed strongly that the only method of preventing war was a definite declaration by Great Britain that she would be on the side of Russia and France; this would keep Germany peaceful. The second point was the request that M. Cambon might have some assurance that if war did take place France could rely upon the support of England.

M. Cambon then asked me for my reply to what he had said yesterday.

Sir E. Grey to
Sir F. Bertie,
July 31.

I said that we had come to the conclusion, in the Cabinet to-day, that we could not give any pledge at the present time. Though we should have to put our policy before Parliament, we could not pledge Parliament in advance. Up to the present moment, we did not feel, and public opinion did not feel, that any treaties or obligations of this country were involved. Further developments might alter this situation and cause the Government and Parliament to take the view that intervention was justified. The preservation of the neutrality of Belgium might be, I would not say a decisive, but an important factor, in determining our attitude. Whether we proposed to Parliament to intervene or not to intervene in a war, Parliament would wish to know how we stood with regard to the neutrality of Belgium, and it might be that I should ask both France and Germany whether each was prepared to undertake an engagement that she would not be the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium.

M. Cambon repeated his question whether we would help France if Germany made an attack on her.

I said that I could only adhere to the answer that, as far as things had gone at present, we could not take any engagement.

M. Cambon urged that Germany had from the beginning rejected proposa that might have made for peace. It could not be to England's interest that France should be crushed by Germany. We should then be in a very diminished position with regard to Germany. In 1870 we had made a great mistake in allowing an enormous increase of German strength, and we should now be repeating the mistake. He asked me whether I could not submit his question to the Cabinet again.

I said that the Cabinet would certainly be summoned as soon as there was some new development, but at the present moment the only answer I could give was that we could not undertake any definite engagement.'

I then asked Sir E. Grey concerning the Cabinet Council which took place this morning. He replied that after having examined the situation the Cabinet had thought M. Paul Cambon, July 31. that for the moment the British Government were unable to guarantee to us their intervention, that they intended to take steps to obtain from Germany and France an understanding to respect Belgian neutrality, but that before considering intervention it was necessary to wait for the situation to develop.

I asked Sir E. Grey if, before intervening, the British Government would await the invasion of French territory. I insisted on the fact that the measures already taken on our frontier by Germany showed an intention to attack in the near future, and that, if a renewal of the mistake of Europe in 1870 was to be avoided, England should consider at once the circumstances in which she would give France the help on which she relied.

Sir E. Grey replied that the opinion of the Cabinet had only been formed on the situation at the moment, that the situation might be modified, and that in that case a meeting of the Cabinet would be called together at once in order to consider it.

Sir A. Nicolson, whom I saw on leaving the room of the Secretary of State, told me that the Cabinet would meet again to-morrow, and confidentially gave me to understand that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would be certain to renew the discussion.¹

Sir Edward Grey, it will be seen, was still obdurate. He would not come out of his reserve; he could give no undertaking. The situation, however, was becoming a very difficult one, and one can feel that it was not easy to meet with a refusal the very strong appeal which was made to him by France. Reading between the lines, one can see that this request went far beyond the guarded and restrained language in which it is reported—it was a passionate appeal to the friendship and honour of Great Britain not to desert France in the terrible danger that was impending.

I do not argue that this course was the right one; it has indeed been severely criticised. There are many who would have desired that a definite pledge should at this time have been given to France. However this may be, the essence of the situation is undoubted; the matter had been put before the Cabinet; it was the Cabinet which had refused to give the pledge.

¹ F. 110.

The secrecy of the Cabinet is the corner-stone of the British constitution, but it is no secret that at this time the Cabinet was sharply divided. Some would at once have given to France the promise which she asked for; others, perhaps the majority, pledged by their whole career to the cause of peace, conscious that they owed the position into which they had been put to the confidence placed in them that they would do their utmost to prevent the country being plunged into a needless war, felt that they would be violating a trust had they given their consent. Can we blame them if they resisted up to, nay almost beyond, the very last moment? Can we blame them if they refused to recognise the character and extent of the danger which was approaching, and if they still continued to attribute to others the convictions and emotions by which they were themselves moved?

But was it possible for the Cabinet to have done as the French would have wished? They were no more independent than was Sir Edward Grey, for they had to take account of Parliament and public opinion in the country. It cannot be too often insisted upon that it would have been impossible for Great Britain to take part in a Continental war unless there was a strong and practically unanimous feeling in favour of doing so throughout the country. Had they on this day given the required pledge to France, had they in consequence of this been compelled to take part in the war on this reason, and this reason alone, such a feeling would not have been present. Who can doubt that the opinion in the country would have been greatly divided? It would not have been sufficient that they might have secured, as they probably would have done, a majority in the House of Commons; they would certainly have been opposed by a very strong and active minority in their own party, and the whole vote and influence of the Labour Party would have been thrown against them. Under these circumstances they could not with success have appealed to the country for that practical support which was necessary if warlike operations were to be carried on with success. They could not have appealed, as they have been able to do, to the Dominions and Colonies, and they would have entered on the war as a divided nation and a divided Empire.

For any British statesman the public opinion of the country is a matter to be considered as one of the essential factors in the

scale just as much as the policy of other Governments or the public opinion of other nations. It would have been different had the Government of the country been a different one, or had there been compulsory military service, so that the soldiers would have been ready whatever the country had thought ; in a country where the army is recruited by voluntary enlistment matters are very different from what they are in Germany or even in France. This Sir Edward Grey had seen all along, and this he had repeatedly explained. He could not act unless he was supported by public opinion. He had throughout foretold that public opinion would eventually force him to go to war, because, with his knowledge of the Continental situation and the character of German policy, he foresaw, and truly foresaw, that if war ensued Germany would certainly pass on to acts of such a kind that they would arouse the strongest indignation. As we shall see, he was right in this. On the other hand, it was, even at this time, still possible that Germany would refrain from such acts, and in that case England would not have interfered. She would not have done so even though, in the largest sense and looking to the great problems of the future, it would have been for her interest to do so. The only possible policy was to wait on events, to leave the initiative to Germany, and not to anticipate acts committed by Germany of such a kind as to force the hand of the English Government. None the less we must not hide from ourselves the extreme difficulty of the position in which the British Cabinet was placed. This is shown in a most marked way by the following telegram which was sent on July 31st from the President of the French Republic to the King of England, and by the reply :

DEAR AND GREAT FRIEND,

In the grave events through which Europe is passing, I feel bound to convey to Your Majesty the information which the Government of the Republic have received from Germany. The military preparations which are being undertaken by the Imperial Government, especially in the immediate neighbourhood of the French frontier, are being pushed forward every day with fresh vigour and speed. France, resolved to continue to the very end to do all that lies within her power to maintain peace, has, up to the present, confined herself solely to the most indispensable precautionary measures. But it does not appear that her prudence and moderation serve to check

Germany's action ; indeed, quite the reverse. We are, perhaps, then, in spite of the moderation of the Government of the Republic and the calm of public opinion, on the eve of the most terrible events.

From all the information which reaches us it would seem that war would be inevitable if Germany were convinced that the British Government would not intervene in a conflict in which France might be engaged ; if, on the other hand, Germany were convinced that the Entente Cordiale would be affirmed, in case of need, even to the extent of taking the field side by side, there would be the greatest chance that peace would remain unbroken.

It is true that our military and naval arrangements leave complete liberty to Your Majesty's Government, and that, in the letters exchanged in 1912 between Sir Edward Grey and M. Paul Cambon, Great Britain and France entered into nothing more than a mutual agreement to consult one another in the event of European tension, and to examine in concert whether common action were advisable.

But the character of close friendship which public feeling has given in both countries to the Entente between Great Britain and France, the confidence with which our two Governments have never ceased to work for the maintenance of peace, and the signs of sympathy which Your Majesty has ever shown to France, justify me in informing you quite frankly of my impressions, which are those of the Government of the Republic and of all France.

It is, I consider, on the language and the action of the British Government that henceforward the last chances of a peaceful settlement depend.

We, ourselves, from the initial stages of the crisis, have enjoined upon our ally an attitude of moderation from which they have not swerved. In concert with Your Majesty's Government, and in conformity with Sir E. Grey's latest suggestions, we will continue to act on the same lines.

But if all efforts at conciliation emanate from one side, and if Germany and Austria can speculate on the abstention of Great Britain, Austria's demands will remain inflexible, and an agreement between her and Russia will become impossible. I am profoundly convinced that at the present moment, the more Great Britain, France, and Russia can give a deep impression that they are united in their diplomatic action, the more possible will it be to count upon the preservation of peace.

I beg that Your Majesty will excuse a step which is only inspired by the hope of seeing the European balance of power definitely reaffirmed.

Pray accept the expression of my most cordial sentiments.

R. POINCARÉ.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, *August 1, 1914.*

DEAR AND GREAT FRIEND,

I most highly appreciate the sentiments which moved you to write to me in so cordial and friendly a spirit, and I am grateful to you for having stated your views so fully and frankly.

You may be assured that the present situation in Europe has been the cause of much anxiety and preoccupation to me, and I am glad to think that our two Governments have worked so amicably together in endeavouring to find a peaceful solution of the questions at issue.

It would be a source of real satisfaction to me if our united efforts were to meet with success, and I am still not without hope that the terrible events which seem so near may be averted.

I admire the restraint which you and your Government are exercising in refraining from taking undue military measures on the frontier and not adopting an attitude which could in any wise be interpreted as a provocative one.

I am personally using my best endeavours with the Emperors of Russia and of Germany towards finding some solution by which actual military operations may at any rate be postponed, and time be thus given for calm discussion between the Powers. I intend to prosecute these efforts without intermission so long as any hope remains of an amicable settlement.

As to the attitude of my country, events are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to forecast future developments; but you may be assured that my Government will continue to discuss freely and frankly any point which might arise of interest to our two nations with M. Cambon.

Believe me,

M. le Président,

(Signed) GEORGE R.I.

The reply was the only one which could be sent in the circumstances. But we may feel that it was only with deep regret that nothing more could at this moment be said.

They had, in fact, to deal with the precise situation as it stood at that moment, and in particular it would be necessary to consider, as each particular case arose, whether this was action of such a kind as to force Great Britain out of its attitude of neutrality. At this particular moment one matter of supreme importance must immediately be considered, namely that of Belgian neutrality. Even as to this Sir Edward Grey's language was at this time very restrained; "this would be," he said, "I would not say a decisive, but an important factor, in determining our attitude. Whether we proposed to Parliament

to intervene or not to intervene in a war, Parliament would wish to know how we stood with regard to the neutrality of Belgium, and it might be that I should ask both France and Germany whether each was prepared to undertake an engagement that she would not be the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium.”¹

This request was, as a matter of fact, sent that evening. As soon as the news of the proclamation of *Kriegsgefahr* in Germany had reached London, Sir Edward Grey had sent a formal request in identical terms to both France and Germany, asking their intentions on this matter.

I still trust that situation is not irretrievable, but in view of prospect of mobilisation in Germany it becomes essential to His Majesty's Government, in view of existing treaties, to ask whether French (German) Government are prepared to engage to respect neutrality of Belgium so long as no other Power violates it.

Sir E. Grey,
July 31.

A similar request is being addressed to German (French) Government. It is important to have an early answer.²

The French answer, which was sent that night, was quite satisfactory.

Political Director has brought me the reply of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to your inquiry respecting the neutrality of Belgium. It is as follows :

Sir F. Bertie,
July 31.

French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other Power violating that neutrality that France might find herself under the necessity, in order to assure defence of her own security, to act otherwise. This assurance has been given several times. President of the Republic spoke of it to the King of the Belgians, and the French Minister at Brussels has spontaneously renewed the assurance to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day.³

The answer from Germany, was, however, very different.

¹ In order to understand this it must be remembered that it was said to the French Ambassador ; to the German Ambassador different language would have been used.

² E. 114.

³ E. 125. See below p. 372.

Neutrality of Belgium, referred to in your telegram of 31st July to Sir F. Bertie.

I have seen Secretary of State, who informs me Sir E. Goschen, that he must consult the Emperor and the July 31. Chancellor before he could possibly answer. I

gathered from what he said that he thought any reply they might give could not but disclose a certain amount of their plan of campaign in the event of war ensuing, and he was therefore very doubtful whether they would return any answer at all. His Excellency, nevertheless, took note of your request.

It appears from what he said that German Government consider that certain hostile acts have already been committed by Belgium. As an instance of this, he alleged that a consignment of corn for Germany had been placed under an embargo already.¹

I hope to see His Excellency to-morrow again to discuss the matter further, but the prospect of obtaining a definite answer seems to me remote.

In speaking to me to-day the Chancellor made it clear that Germany would in any case desire to know the reply returned to you by the French Government.²

This naturally would justify the gravest apprehensions as to the course which Germany intended to pursue—apprehensions which had already been aroused by the proposals made on Wednesday.

The Cabinet met again on Saturday morning. The situation was again discussed. Even now it is clear that no final decision was arrived at. There was still apparently an idea that some means short of actual war might be found for fulfilling the guarantee. The extent, nature, and means of enforcing it was still a matter for consideration; no loophole, no method of peaceful pressure was left unexplored. The further consideration was postponed till a later meeting which was to take place that day. Sir Edward Grey was, however, for the present authorised to present to Prince Lichnowsky a written Note, which may be taken to indicate the limit to which they had advanced.

The reply of the German Government with regard to the neutrality of Belgium is a matter of very great regret, because the neutrality of Belgium does affect feeling in this country. If Germany could see her way to give the same positive reply as that

¹ This episode is explained by the Belgian Government, B. 79.

² E. 122.

which has been given by France, it would materially contribute to relieve anxiety and tension here; while on the other hand, if there were a violation of the neutrality of Belgium by one combatant while the other respected it, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling in this country.

During the course of this interview Prince Lichnowsky attempted to turn the conversation on to the question of British neutrality, and tried to get some definite statement as to the conditions on which, supposing that the neutrality of Belgium was satisfactorily settled, Great Britain would engage to remain neutral. Sir Edward Grey refused to follow him on to this ground or to give any answer to this question.

He asked me whether, if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgium neutrality, we would engage to remain neutral.

I replied that I could not say that; our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude should be. All I could say was that our attitude would be determined largely by public opinion here, and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here. I did not think that we could give a promise of neutrality on that condition alone.

The Ambassador pressed me as to whether I could not formulate conditions on which we would remain neutral. He even suggested that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed.

I said that I felt obliged to refuse definitely any promise to remain neutral on similar terms, and I could only say that we must keep our hands free.¹

Sir Edward Grey has just read to me the following declaration which has been unanimously adopted by the Cabinet. . . . On my question whether on the condition that we would maintain the neutrality of Belgium he could give me a definite declaration with regard to the neutrality of Great Britain; the Minister answered that that was impossible, but that this question would play a great part in public opinion in this country. If we violated Belgium neutrality in a war with France there would certainly be a change in public opinion which would make it difficult for the Cabinet here to maintain friendly neutrality. For the time there was not the slightest intention to proceed in a hostile manner against us. It would be the desire to avoid this if there was any possibility of doing so. It was, however, difficult to draw a line

Prince Lich-
nowsky, August
1, 5.30 p.m.

¹ E. 123.

up to which we could go without intervention on this side. He turned again and again to Belgium neutrality, and was of opinion that this question would also play a great part.

There were, of course, two reasons for this. First it was necessary to guard against any appearance of making Belgian neutrality a matter of bargaining. The maintenance of the Treaty of London was a positive obligation, and until full security was received that this treaty would be observed no conversations of any kind on kindred subjects could be begun. Had Sir Edward Grey acted otherwise, had he allowed himself to be enticed on to this ground and to discuss the more general question of British neutrality, suggesting definite conditions, it might then have been made to appear that Great Britain had offered to maintain neutrality on certain conditions, and Belgian neutrality would have been incorporated among these conditions. If, after that, the negotiations had broken down, it might have been represented that the maintenance of the Treaty of London was included among these conditions, and it would have been put on the same plane as they; it would then have resulted from this that when the negotiations had failed, and Great Britain had perhaps actually gone to war, the conditions offered by Germany naturally fell to the ground and she had a free hand; but Belgian neutrality being included among these conditions, Germany would then have claimed that this discussion, followed by the failure of the negotiations, had given her the right to invade Belgium. In order to avoid this it was absolutely necessary to keep the question of Belgium apart and make this a general governing principle which must be settled before discussion on any other matters could be begun.

Even had this difficulty been out of the way it would, however, have been almost impossible to formulate all the conditions necessary to be observed if this country was to enter into any engagement not to take part in the war. We must distinguish clearly two quite different points: the fact of neutrality, and a binding engagement to observe neutrality. Even at this period it was perhaps possible, it was at any rate conceivable, that this country might keep out of the war, but to refrain from entering on the war was quite a different thing from binding her hands so as to debar herself from doing so if events arose which made the latter course desirable. Who

could foresee all the possible contingencies that might arise? No State has made any engagement of this kind; it has not even been suggested to countries such as the United States, whose interests are far less closely involved. Italy remained neutral, but reserved to herself a free hand to intervene on either side whenever her interest seemed to require it. But what has not been asked or suggested of these States could be still less acceptable to England, for there is no State which has such wide and diverse interests as England, and who could say when these might be involved owing to events which before the outbreak of war could not possibly be foreseen? To have bound her hands at the beginning would have been a fatal and impossible policy; the only course was to continue to maintain a completely free hand. Let us remember, for instance, the extremely delicate and difficult questions which later experience has shown are involved in the definition of neutrality in connection with commerce; these would especially have affected Great Britain. Then, again, innumerable questions would doubtless have arisen regarding the war in the East and the position of Turkey; these, owing to the relations of Great Britain to Egypt, might at any time have forced her hand and compelled her to come in. If, however, she had beforehand promised her neutrality to Germany, and Germany in return for this promise had limited the sphere of her operations, this country would have been placed in a very difficult position.

The actual terms suggested by Prince Lichnowsky could not, of course have been accepted. The German Government always seem to have thought that they could get over every difficulty by the mere promise not to annex territory; but there were many other questions of equal importance—for instance, as we shall see directly, the possibility of the destruction of the French fleet, and an attack by Germany upon the towns on the northern coast of France.

In asking this question Prince Lichnowsky was apparently acting on his own initiative; he had no instructions or authorisation from Berlin. In doing so he was quite within his duty, and only showed, as he did on other occasions, his genuine desire to find some means of preserving peace between Germany and Great Britain; but the conversation cannot be taken as signifying that the German Government had any intention of abandoning their

design for advancing on France through Belgian territory. On this there was from beginning to end no symptom of scruple or hesitation.¹

IV

This question of the violation of Belgian neutrality was then, to use M. Cambon's language, one hypothesis which was under consideration, and as to this, though the formal statement had not yet been made, the language of the Note to Prince Lichnowsky was in effect a clear intimation that a refusal by Germany to maintain the Treaty of London would be regarded by England as an unfriendly act which would bring her into the field. At the same time another hypothesis was being considered which was, from the military point of view, even more urgent. We have explained above the supreme importance of the naval situation, and shown that it would be impossible for Great Britain to stand aside and see a naval attack made by Germany either on the French fleet or the French coasts. If war was declared and an attack of this kind was contemplated by Germany it would probably take place immediately. It was absolutely necessary for France to be assured of English intentions as to this; on it their whole dispositions would depend. It was more urgent than the question of Belgium, because of the fact that naval warfare is more rapid, sudden and unexpected than operations on land. Sir Edward Grey therefore, when he saw M. Cambon after the meeting of the Cabinet, after explaining the situation with regard to Germany and the refusal of England to give a declaration of neutrality, and after putting him in possession of the facts with regard to Belgium, proceeded:

In the second place, the English fleet is mobilised, and Sir Edward Grey will propose to his colleagues that he should state that it will oppose the passage of the Straits of Dover by the German fleet, or, if the German fleet should pass through (*venaient à le passer*), will oppose any demonstration on the French coasts. These two questions will be dealt with at the meeting on Monday. I drew the attention of the Secretary of State to the point that, if during this intervening period any incident took place, it was necessary not to allow a surprise, and that it would be desirable to think of intervening in time.²

M. Paul Cambon,
August 1.

¹ See note at end of chapter.

² F. 126.

Originally the intention was to come to a decision on this matter on Monday. M. Cambon, however, quite justly objected that this postponement might have serious consequences. The criticism was a just one. German mobilisation was ordered that day; a request in the nature of an ultimatum had been presented to France. France was driven to mobilise in self-defence; the declaration of war was imminent, and a surprise attack might be expected at any moment. It probably would have been made had not the British fleet been mobilised. Probably in consequence of this the matter was brought before a meeting of the Cabinet on Sunday. The Cabinet then gave their consent to Sir Edward Grey acting in the manner he suggested, and that day he was instructed to give the official statement to the French Government on this matter.

After the Cabinet this morning I gave M. Cambon the following memorandum :

Sir E. Grey to Sir F. Bertie, August 2. I am authorised to give an assurance that, if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping, the British fleet will give all the protection in its power.

This assurance is of course subject to the policy of His Majesty's Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding His Majesty's Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German fleet takes place.¹

In a conversation which followed Sir Edward Grey explained to M. Cambon more fully the situation as it appeared from the English point of view.

I pointed out that we had very large questions and most difficult issues to consider, and that Government felt that they could not bind themselves to declare war upon Germany necessarily if war broke out between France and Germany to-morrow, but it was essential to the French Government, whose fleet had long been concentrated in the Mediterranean, to know how to make their dispositions with their north coast entirely undefended. We therefore thought it necessary to give them this assurance. It did not bind us to go to war with Germany unless the German fleet took the action indicated, but it did give a security to France that would enable her to settle the disposition of her own Mediterranean fleet.²

¹ E. 148.

² E. 148.

At the meeting of the Cabinet on Sunday the question of Belgium and of Luxemburg was again considered. It will be remembered that the German army had entered Luxemburg that morning. The position taken up as to the Grand Duchy was that which had been clearly laid down in 1867 when the neutrality was determined. As had been clearly explained then, Great Britain in giving her adhesion to the treaty had done so with the express condition that she did not thereby undertake an obligation to maintain the neutrality of this State by war, but only undertook an obligation not herself to violate it.

Afterwards in speaking to me of the neutrality of Belgium and that of Luxemburg, the Secretary of State reminded me that the Convention of 1867, referring to the Grand Duchy, differed from the treaty referring to Belgium, in that England was bound to require the observance of this latter Convention without the assistance of the other guaranteeing Powers, while with regard to Luxemburg all the guaranteeing Powers were to act in concert.¹

M. Paul Cambon,
August 2.

The position of Belgium of course differed completely from this; and as Sir Edward Grey explained in a later speech, the Cabinet at this meeting "came to the conclusion that respect for the neutrality of Belgium must be one of the conditions on which England could remain neutral."

The protection of Belgian neutrality is here considered so important that England will regard its violation by Germany as a *casus belli*. It is a specially English interest, and there is no doubt that the British Government, faithful to the traditions of their policy, will insist upon it, even if the business world, in which German influence is making tenacious efforts, exercises pressure to prevent the Government committing itself against Germany.²

M. Paul Cambon,
August 2.

M. Cambon asked me about the violation of Luxemburg. I told him the doctrine on that point laid down by Lord Derby and Lord Clarendon in 1867. He asked me what we should say about the violation of the neutrality of Belgium. I said that was a much more important matter; we were considering what statement we should make in Parliament to-morrow—in effect, whether we should declare violation of Belgian neutrality to be a *casus belli*. I told him what had been said to the German Ambassador on this point.³

Sir E. Grey,
August 2.

¹ F. 137. Cf. pp. 353-4.

² F. 137.

³ E. 148.

It will be noticed that these statements do not completely agree ; Sir Edward Grey himself does not at this time categorically state the violation of Belgian neutrality would be a *casus belli*, just as he had refrained from stating this to Germany ; while he tells us in his later speech that the Cabinet had as a matter of fact come to a decision. Probably what had happened was that on this day the majority of the Cabinet had determined, if the Germans attacked Belgium, to go to war ; and indeed no other decision was possible. There probably, however, still remained a strong and effective opposition of a minority too important to be neglected, and if we are to believe the rumours which were current, several members of the Cabinet had offered their resignation. Under these circumstances it would clearly be desirable not at once to make effective the decision that had been arrived at, by publishing it or communicating it to a foreign Government ; this would make it possible for those members of the Cabinet who differed from the determination not to press that their resignations should be immediately accepted, and by waiting it was always possible that further events would cause them to change their opinion. The opposition, even though it did not prevail, might be strong enough seriously to compromise the position of the Cabinet in the House and in the country. It might be strong enough to prevent the Cabinet being able eventually to carry out the resolution to which they had come. As we shall see, this prudence and reserve was amply justified, for in two days events occurred which induced, nay in fact compelled, nearly all those who on the Sunday felt doubts, to give their complete and whole-hearted adhesion to the policy of the majority.

On this day, then, there were two definite issues—naval operations, and Belgium ; these were vital, and any attack on them by Germany would bring Great Britain into the field. If no such action took place, and if Germany was conciliatory on these two points, there was still a possibility that England would stand aside, observing an attitude of armed and benevolent neutrality towards France.

V

On Monday a further important development took place ; Germany, while continuing to refuse any concession as to Belgium, agreed to accept conditions as to naval warfare. In doing so they had recourse to an expedient which is very unusual, and in so critical a situation seems to have been highly undesirable. The Councillor of the German Embassy in London made a statement to the Press to the following effect :

The maintenance of British neutrality would in no way injure France ; on the contrary, it might be argued that, by remaining neutral, Great Britain could give France exactly as much strategic assistance and a good deal more effective diplomatic help, as, according to all reliable information, there is no intention of sending British troops to the Continent ; and as a few British divisions, considering the enormous numbers engaged, could hardly alter the balance of power, all England could do for France is to protect her North Sea coast from invasion, and to prevent the neutral ports of Belgium and Holland being used as bases of armed aggression against France.

Germany would be disposed to give an undertaking that she will not attack France by sea in the north, or make any warlike use of the sea coast of Belgium or Holland, if it appeared that Great Britain would make this undertaking a condition of her neutrality for the time being. Thus England, without going to war herself, could render to France the maximum of assistance she could give by going to war. That England, as a neutral Power, maintaining an armed neutrality, would diplomatically be a greater asset for France for the termination of hostilities at an early moment than if herself involved in war is self-evident.

The first part of this is of no real importance except for the interesting light which it throws on to the German conception of English power. The statement that any military assistance that could be rendered by Great Britain to France would be practically negligible probably represents the real belief of the German Government and the General Staff.

The latter part, however, is of great importance as showing the two points—(1) the resolution, whatever happened, to advance

into Belgium ; (2) the readiness to accept conditions as to the limitation of naval warfare.

M. Paul Cambon comments on this :

The German Ambassador has sent to the Press a *communiqué* saying that if England remained neutral Germany would give up all naval operations and would not make use of the Belgian coast as a *point d'appui*. My answer is that respecting the coast is not respecting the neutrality of the territory, and that the German ultimatum is already a violation of this neutrality.¹

M. Paul Cambon,
August 3.

It is to be presumed that this communication was not issued without authority, but the attempt in this way to influence public opinion, going behind the Government, was one which could not fail to have very unfavourable results upon the official communications between the two Governments.

Whatever value is to be attributed to it, this statement, so far as it goes, shows that it was Belgium which was the essential point on which all possibility of negotiations broke down. With regard to the two governing conditions of English policy, the first, that the war with France should be confined to the mainland and not extend to the sea, is on the whole approved ; on the other hand there is a persistence in the project of invading Belgium even if England remains neutral.

But as a matter of fact the offer made in this communication was confirmed by the German Chancellor himself in his speech before the Reichstag on August 4th. There he says :

As regards the attitude of England, the declarations which Sir Edward Grey made yesterday in the English House of Commons have made clear the standpoint taken by the English Government. We have given to the English Government a declaration that so long as England remains neutral our fleet will not attack the north coast of France, and that we will not touch the integrity and the independence of Belgium. I hereby publicly repeat this declaration before the whole world, and I can add that so long as England remains neutral we should also be willing, if this was met by similar action on the other side, not to undertake any hostile operations against the French mercantile marine.

¹ F. 144.

After this there can be no doubt about the facts. The one essential matter which was at issue between the two Governments was the invasion of Belgium. The very far-reaching requirement of the British Government as to maritime operations was met; it was the insistence on the violation of Belgian territory which was the one and sole cause of the irreconcilable differences between the two countries.

It is indeed true that many months later the Chancellor in another speech on the same spot made a statement which is quite irreconcilable with this. But his statements are often difficult to reconcile with one another.

Belgian neutrality, which England professed to protect, is a mask. On the 2nd of August at 7 o'clock in the evening we communicated to Brussels that the military plans of France which were known to us compelled us for self-protection to march through Belgium. But on the afternoon of this same 2nd of August, that is before anything was known in London of our *démarche* at Brussels or could be known, England had promised her support to France, and indeed had made an unconditional engagement in the case of an attack of the German fleet on the French coast. In this there was no word about Belgian neutrality. This fact is confirmed by the declaration which Sir Edward Grey gave in the English House of Commons on the 3rd of August, and which in consequence of the difficulty of telegraphic communication was not completely known to me upon the 4th of August, and which is confirmed even in the Blue book of the English Government. How could England then maintain that it drew the sword because we had violated Belgian neutrality?

But on the 3rd of August, before Sir E. Grey's speech, the communiqué had been sent to the London Press, and on the 4th of August the Chancellor himself said that this condition was one which could be accepted, and the acceptance of which he had himself communicated to the British Government. This condition, then, was not the cause of the war, and it is quite untrue to say that in consequence of it England was practically in a state of war with Germany.

If on this day the German Government had suspended and cancelled the attack upon Belgium, there was apparently nothing standing between Germany and English neutrality. It was Belgian neutrality, and Belgian neutrality alone, which was the cause of the irreconcilable difference.

This was shown by another interview with Prince Lichnowsky :

Just as Sir Edward Grey was starting this morning for the Cabinet, my German colleague, who had already seen him yesterday, came to press upon him to say that M. Paul Cambon, August 3. the neutrality of England did not depend upon respecting Belgian neutrality. Sir Edward Grey refused all conversations on this matter.¹

It is worth while considering a moment what would have been the probable result had Germany refrained from attacking France through Belgium. There is no doubt that this country would have been placed in an extremely difficult position. Probably, however, she would not, at least at the beginning of the war, have taken any part in it. By securing France against an attack by sea and also by securing her unprotected northern frontier she would, even without going to war, have given to her most important and valuable assistance. The war between Germany and France would then have been confined to the comparatively short eastern frontier; it might reasonably be anticipated that under these circumstances the French army would, without great difficulty, have been able to maintain an effective defensive. Our knowledge of the events which have happened since shows us how very serious was the disadvantage under which France was placed by having to meet the unexpected attack on the north for which she was not prepared. This explains the series of disasters with which the war began. If the fighting had been confined to the carefully prepared positions in the east, these disasters would not have taken place; the war would probably have quickly resolved itself into prolonged operations of a kind similar to those which have occupied the greater part of the winter; on the shorter frontier the assistance of the British army would in fact not have been required.

Importance has been attached to the fact that on the Sunday the leaders of the Opposition definitely expressed the opinion that Great Britain should at once declare herself ready to support France, quite apart from the question of Belgium; this view no doubt was very widely held. On the other hand it must always be remembered that action of this kind seems easier to others than it is to the Government which have to bear the

¹ F. 144.

responsibility for the decision, and doubt may be expressed whether the leaders of the Opposition would have taken the same view had the actual responsibility rested upon them.

Had there been a really able statesman conducting the policy of Germany he would probably have managed the negotiations, as he easily might, in such a way as really to make it almost impossible for Great Britain to take part in the war; the result would have been that Germany would have been able to hold France on the Rhine with a comparatively small number of men, and been able to throw her full forces from the beginning into the war with Russia. That this was not done is probably due to the influence of purely military considerations on the Government; the advice of the General Staff compelled the Government to adopt a policy which was in accordance with plans of campaign which had been drawn up many years before and carefully matured.

If we consider the whole course of negotiations there is one conclusion to be drawn: the British constitution had withstood with success the most severe test to which it had been placed in human memory. There has been much talk of secret diplomacy, of the country being dragged into a war without the people having any voice in the matter. There had been no secret diplomacy; there had been no engagement with France which was not generally known. The dispositions of the fleets was a matter of common notoriety; in all discussions as to the relative strengths of the different navies the position of the French fleet in the Mediterranean and the consequent withdrawal of British ships from those seas was taken into account. The conversations with France as to the military measures to be taken under certain contingencies were nothing more than a device for giving effect to a diplomatic situation which had been publicly proclaimed for ten years.

And when we come to the final crisis we find the Cabinet exercising a constant and sure control over every stage in its development; members of the Cabinet are throughout in close touch with public opinion, and the free discussions which take place there represent in miniature the public discussion and the public differences which were occupying the country and the Press as a whole. And if at times it may seem, as it seemed at the time to outside observers, that the Government erred on

the side of caution, restraint and prudence, when the accounts were closed it appeared that this moderation had been of incalculable benefit to the country. Had the affairs of other nations been conducted as were those of this country, had they shown the same care to test each step before it was taken, had they refused, as the British Government refused, to be carried away by large ideas, vague imaginations and terrors, grandiose schemes of ambition, and had they kept in touch as the British Cabinet was in touch with the feeling of every party throughout the country, then war would not have ensued.

What had hitherto been still merely a possible contingency on this day became a fact. Early on Monday morning the German troops crossed the frontier; and on the same day the King of the Belgians addressed an urgent appeal to King George for his help; then at last the reluctance of the minority broke down, and this brought about a practically united Cabinet.

We must now turn to the consideration of the action of Belgium.

APPENDIX

Together with these discussions on English neutrality another discussion was going on during the Saturday on a different point which, while it was not to have any real influence on the course of events, must be explained. On that morning at eleven o'clock Prince Lichnowsky telegraphed:

Sir Edward Grey has just called me to the telephone and has asked me whether I thought I should declare that in the event of France remaining neutral in a Russo-German war we would not attack the French. I said to him that I believed that I could assume responsibility for this.

Sir Edward Grey's explanation of this, made in the House of Commons on August 28th, is as follows:

"It was reported to me one day that the German Ambassador had suggested that Germany might remain neutral in a war between Russia and Austria, and also engage not to attack France, if we would remain neutral and secure the neutrality of France. I said at once that if the German Government thought such an arrangement possible I was sure we could secure it. It appeared, however, that what the Ambassador meant was that we should secure the neutrality of France if Germany went to war with Russia. This was quite a different proposal, and,

as I supposed it in all probability to be incompatible with the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance, it was not in my power to promise to secure it."

There is some difference between the accounts of what happened during the rest of the day. At a quarter past one Prince Lichnowsky telegraphed:

Sir Edward Grey's private secretary has just been to see me to say that the Minister wishes to make proposals to him for the neutrality of England even in the case that we made war with Russia as well as with France. I shall see Sir Edward Grey this afternoon and will report further.

Sir Edward Grey says that: "Subsequently, the Ambassador sent for my private secretary, and told him that, as soon as the misunderstanding was cleared up, he had sent a second telegram to Berlin to cancel the impression produced by the first telegram he had sent on the subject. The first telegram has been published. This second telegram does not seem to have been published."

This second telegram, *i.e.* the one just quoted, was published on September 5th.

As soon as Prince Lichnowsky's first telegram reached Berlin, telegrams were sent from the Emperor to King George, and from the Chancellor to Prince Lichnowsky.

I have just received the communication of your Government by which they offer the neutrality of France under the guarantee of Great Britain. To this offer there was added the question whether under these conditions Germany would refrain from attacking France. For technical reasons the mobilisation which I have already ordered this afternoon on two fronts—east and west—proceeds according to the proposals made. A counter order cannot now be given because unfortunately your telegram came too late, but if France offers me its neutrality, which must be guaranteed by the English army and fleet, I will naturally give up the idea of an attack on France and apply my troops elsewhere. I hope that France will not be nervous. The troops on my frontier will at once by telegraph and by telephone be kept back from crossing the French frontier.

German
Emperor,
August 1.

Germany is ready to agree to the English proposal in the event of England guaranteeing with all its forces the unconditional neutrality of France in conflict between Germany and Russia. The German mobilisation has been completed on the ground of the Russian challenge before the English proposals were received. In consequence our advance to the French frontier cannot now be altered. We,

Imperial
Chancellor,
August 1.

however, guarantee that the French frontier will not be crossed by our troops until Monday the 3rd of August at seven o'clock in the evening, in case the promise of England is received by that time.

Any suggestion that France would remain neutral in a war between Austria and Germany on the one side and Russia on the other would of course have been extremely convenient to Germany, and it was in fact just what the German Government had attempted to attain by the approach made in Paris a week before by the German Ambassador.

It is not quite clear when and how the misapprehension was removed. At the end of the telegram from Prince Lichnowsky recounting his interview with Sir Edward Grey during the course of the afternoon he adds the following :

He (Sir Edward Grey) had also thought if it was not possible that we and France should in a case of a Russian war stand armed over against one another without attacking. I asked
Prince Lichnowsky,
August 1. him if he would be in a position to ensure that France would assent to an agreement of this kind. As we neither wanted to destroy France nor to annex portions of French territory I could conceive that we would give our assent to an arrangement of this kind which would secure for us the neutrality of Great Britain. The Minister said he would make inquiries ; he also recognised the difficulties of holding back the military on both sides.

Later in the day, at 8.30, Prince Lichnowsky again telegraphed :

My communication of this morning is cancelled by my communication of this evening. As there is no positive English proposal before us, further steps in the sense of the points I put before you are superfluous.

Sometime also on the same day King George answered the Emperor's telegram as follows :

In answer to your telegram which has just been received, I believe that there must be a misunderstanding with regard to a suggestion which was made in a friendly conversation between Prince Lichnowsky and Sir Edward
King George,
August 1. Grey when they were discussing how a struggle between the German and the French army might be avoided, so long as there still remained the possibility of an agreement being arrived at between Austria and Russia. Sir Edward Grey will see Prince Lichnowsky early to-morrow morning in order to ascertain whether there is any misunderstanding on his side.

It does not seem possible precisely to determine everything that was

said, but the general point is clear that Sir Edward Grey had seized on some suggestion that had been made to him that it might be possible for France and Germany to neutralise one another, just as England and France had done during the Japanese war. This was misunderstood by Prince Lichnowsky as a suggestion that France might withdraw from her alliance with Russia, which was of course quite a different thing, and a proposal that it would have been quite impossible for Sir Edward Grey to make.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM

THE country which we now call Belgium is, like Alsace-Lorraine, a remnant of the old Kingdom of Lothair, which at the division of the Empire of Charles the Great divided the countries of the East and West Franks. For a thousand years it has been the debatable country between the Latin and the Teuton races, and has in consequence been the scene of innumerable conflicts between Germans and French.

In geographical position, it may be regarded as part of the great plain of Northern France and so as a natural appendage to the Government of Paris; or as part of the country which controls the mouth of the Rhine and thereby the natural heritage of the German race.

Fated thereby to become the constant object of struggle between two great races, it has also been, at least since the days of Edward I, of special interest to the Government of England; and as the centuries have gone on, it had become a familiar principle of English policy that the independence of these Islands would never be secured if the counties of Flanders and Brabant fell into the hands of a great naval and military power. Again and again, in the reign of Edward III, in the time of Elizabeth, throughout the great struggle with France, from the accession of William of Orange, whether in the time of Louis XIV, of the Revolution, or of Napoleon, the armies of England have always been ready to take up the struggle against any other Power which attempted to conquer and annex the Netherlands. In the settlement of Europe at the Congress of Vienna, it was the chief object of British policy to establish this country under a firm Government sufficiently powerful to maintain its own independence.

In order to carry out this object the device was accepted of

joining Holland and Belgium as a kingdom under the rule of the House of Orange. But the decision made in the sixteenth century could not be reversed; the Flemish and French-speaking Roman Catholic inhabitants of Belgium would not accept the rule of their Northern neighbours. The revolt of 1830 threatened once more to involve Europe in a great war; at that time the real danger which was anticipated was a proposal that Belgium should be annexed to France. It had, after the Revolution, been for twenty-five years incorporated in the Republic and afterwards in the Empire, and there was much reason for anticipating that Louis Philippe, who had just been elected King of the French, would be willing to strengthen and popularise his position by embarking on a campaign with the object of restoring to France some of the territory which she had lost in 1815. This catastrophe was avoided by the suggestion, which it is interesting to note came from Prussia, that Belgium should be placed in the same condition as that which had been imposed upon Switzerland in 1815, and should be declared a perpetually neutral State, the neutrality being granted by all those States which had an immediate interest—France, Prussia, Great Britain.

This was at once and gladly agreed to by the other Powers, and it was determined that on these conditions, and on these conditions alone, Belgium should be established as an independent kingdom. The neutrality of the country was a condition precedent to the recognition of the new State. It was therefore, in a peculiar manner, an essential element in its foundation, and was made almost the first clause in the Constitution. The Treaties of 1831 were renewed and revised in 1839, and the Treaty of London, which has existed in undisputed authority since then, contains the words: "Belgium was formed an independent and perpetually neutral State; it shall be bound to observe such neutrality towards all other States."

These treaties not only provided for the neutrality of the State, but they also place the neutrality under the guarantee of the Great Powers—Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. In the original Treaty this is expressed in Clause 25 as follows:

"The Courts of Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia guarantee to His Majesty, the King of the Belgians, the execution of all the preceding articles."

The Treaties of 1839 are different in form. The governing treaty, which determines the limit of Belgian territory and includes the article as to neutrality in terms identical with the article in the Treaty of 1831, is in the form of a treaty between the Great Powers on the one part and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the other; it must be remembered that the occasion for the revision of these treaties was that the Netherlands, which had hitherto refused its consent, now agreed to accede to them.

Following this treaty and signed on the same day, April 19, 1839, is a separate treaty between the five Great Powers on the one part and the Kingdom of Belgium on the other. This contained only two operative clauses: firstly, the repeal of the Treaty of 1831, which had now been superseded, and secondly, a clause that the articles of the Treaty with the Netherlands "are considered as having the same force and validity as if they were textually inserted in the present Act, and that they are thus placed under the guarantee of their said Majesties."

What it comes to, then, is this, that a separate and additional treaty was made between the Great Powers giving their guarantee to the clauses of the Treaty with the Netherlands. The provision was put in this form because the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while a party to the rest of the treaty, did not share in the guarantee. This guarantee was a special obligation thrown upon the Great Powers.

It will be seen, then, that nothing was left undone to establish the full force of this guarantee.

The question has been raised what exactly was implied in neutrality and what was the nature of the obligations implied in the guarantee. As to this we have interesting and valuable evidence in certain supplementary treaties executed in 1831 and 1832, which throw a very valuable light upon the intention and purpose of the original signatories.

Under the Treaty of 1815, there had been special provisions to ensure the maintenance and protection of the "Barrier Forts" established on the southern frontier of Belgium to protect the newly formed kingdom of the Netherlands from any attack from France. In order to give full security against this, the Great Powers had assumed certain responsibilities for the maintenance and garrisoning of these fortresses. The necessity for this

expired with the new arrangements, because it was considered that the neutrality of Belgium when fortified by the guarantee of the Powers was a sufficient safeguard.

In the protocol of the Conference the following passage occurs :

After having carefully examined this question (that of the fortresses), the Four Courts are unanimously of opinion that the new situation in which Belgium would be placed and her neutrality recognised and guaranteed by France must change the system of military defence adopted for the Kingdom of the Netherlands; that the fortresses in question are so numerous that it could not but be difficult for the Belgians to provide for their maintenance and their defence; that besides, *the inviolability of Belgian territory unanimously agreed to would offer a security which did not exist before.*

And a memorandum drawn up at the Conference states :

Besides the neutrality of Belgium, guaranteed by the Five Courts, offers to Holland the *Boulevard* which the barrier system was to assure to it, with this difference that the barrier system imposed on it the costly obligation of maintaining garrisons, while the neutrality of Belgium, placed under the guarantee of the principal Powers of Europe, leaves to it the means of reducing them without endangering its military situation.

Here, then, we have set out in the clearest way the intention of the statesmen at that time. The territory of Belgium was inviolable; it formed a district into which armies could not advance to attack Holland. This was no empty promise, for it was assured by the guarantee of the Powers. But all that applies equally to the other neighbouring States, and it is clearly shown that the soil of Belgium was a place over which military operations could not be undertaken.

We have another, perhaps more important document in which is considered the action which should be taken supposing France violated this treaty. In a secret treaty is the following clause :

In the case that unfortunately the security of the fortresses in question should be compromised, His Majesty the King of the Belgians will concert with the Courts of Austria, Great Britain,

Prussia, and Russia all the measures which the preservation of the fortresses shall require, always under reserve of the neutrality of Belgium.¹

This, then, gives the procedure to be taken in case one of the contracting Powers violated its obligation. The King of the Belgians has to apply to the other Powers and to arrange with them as to the necessary steps to be taken to secure the neutrality and inviolability of the country.

The suggestion has been made that the conception of neutrality did not necessarily imply that the armies of belligerent Powers should not have the right of way through the country. This idea receives some support in the earlier history of Europe, and certainly during the eighteenth century there were numerous cases in which a State which was itself neutral permitted the armies of belligerent States to march across their territory. At this time, indeed, some such arrangement was inevitable. In Germany the territories of the different States were so parcelled and divided that they could not make war without trespassing on one another's territory. For instance, during the eighteenth and indeed far into the nineteenth century, the Prussian monarchy was divided into two separate portions. Except in the one case of Prussia, which was specially provided for by treaties with the Kingdom of Hanover, from the time of the Congress or Vienna the rules of international law on this point had been changed, and it had come to be recognised that it was one of the essential conditions of neutrality that the territory of a neutral State should not be used in this way.² The passages quoted from the protocols of the Conference show quite conclusively that the Powers of Europe, in agreeing that Belgium should be neutral, had definitely in their mind this new interpretation of the conception of neutrality. It is quite clearly and unequivocally laid down that the soil of Belgium should not be used for the passage of troops by belligerent Powers, and it was the prevention of this which was one of the chief reasons for adopting this solution.

¹ These documents are quoted on the authority of "*Neutralité Belge et Invasion Allemande*," by Maxime Lecomte and Lieutenant-Colonel Camille Lévi. (Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, Paris; J. Lebègue & Cie, Brussels.)

² See on this point Oppenheim's "*International Law*," vol. ii. p. 391.

At that time it was not apprehended that danger was imminent from any State except France, but this principle applies equally to violation of the treaty by any other of the contracting parties—for instance, by Prussia or by Great Britain; in case either of these unforeseen events took place the procedure would be the same, and it would be the duty of the King of the Belgians to apply to the other signatories and arrange with them as to the steps to be taken for the protection of his country. This he has to do as soon as the security is compromised; *i.e.* the precautions are to be taken not only when there is an overt attack, but as soon as there is reasonable ground to fear that an attack is intended.

This treaty, then, threw a definite obligation upon each of the contracting Powers; they were bound firstly to abstain from any act that would directly or indirectly be an interference with the neutrality of the country, and in addition, they were bound themselves to come forward actively to support the neutrality against any act of violation of which any other State should be guilty. It threw upon Belgium itself also the obligation not only in her own acts to maintain neutrality, but also to defend it, if necessary, in arms against any violation of it.

In this way there was settled—and, as might be hoped, permanently settled—a controversy which had extended over many hundreds of years and cost untold war and suffering. It removed one of the chief causes of contention between France and Germany; it provided a fresh security against what at that time seemed to be the chief danger which threatened Europe, the aggression of France; it gave security to Great Britain, and at the same time it offered every opportunity for peaceful development, material prosperity and free intellectual life of the Belgians themselves.

It did more than that. This solution had been brought about not by war, but by agreement; the Concert of Europe had been substituted for two opposing camps, and here, in a part of Europe which in the past had been most fruitful of war, the danger seemed to have been permanently averted. This agreement had more than local importance. It was a promise for the future of Europe. The methods by which the Belgian difficulty had been settled might equally well be

applied to similar problems in other places. The longer the settlement continued, the greater its importance became. Belgium was a standing witness that these great matters of international policy could be better settled by peace than by war; the new kingdom was a prominent symbol of civilisation. Whenever a similar case arose, it was always possible to refer to Belgium, and to ask the question could we not act again as we acted there. All that was required was that the other States should be faithful to their obligations, and that if any one showed signs of repudiating its agreement, it should be met by the united voice of the others.

At first, such danger as there was arose from the ambitions of France. The new kingdom from the beginning prospered; there was placed at the head of it a king who, a German by birth, and the husband of a French princess, had in his earlier life been married to the heiress to the English throne, and was the uncle and trusted adviser of Queen Victoria. It passed through the turmoil of revolution with singular tranquillity, and with much success overcame the difficulty of uniting in a single body politic a population almost equally divided between two races and languages. Together with Switzerland, it seemed to have a special function in the European polity, for at a time when the principle of nationality threatened to sweep away every landmark of the past, it showed that it was still possible for Latin and Teuton to live side by side harmoniously, and enjoy the working of what was then the most democratic Constitution of Europe.

The accession of Napoleon III to the throne of France brought dangers, but they were successfully resisted. A believer in the principle of nationality, it was his ambition, while furthering the cause of Italian and German unity, to extend France to what he called her "natural boundary" the Rhine. In the execution of this project no treaties would stand in his way. He had stated that the Treaties of 1815 had ceased to exist, and the Treaties of 1839 would have been no barrier to his ambition. He would have wished to annex Belgium to France in return for support given to Prussia in carrying out her task of creating the unity of Germany, just as he had bargained for Nice and Savoy as the price for Italian unity.

Prussia was, however, stronger than Piedmont, and Bismarck was able to complete his work without the help of Napoleon, and eventually against his will. He refused repeated offers to enter into an alliance with France based on the condition of the overthrow of the Treaty of London, and he always asserted the principle that a State such as Prussia could be relied upon to maintain a promise solemnly made.

The stormy years of 1866 to 1871 were, however, to subject these treaties to a severe strain. They emerged from it strengthened and confirmed; and the test to which they had been subjected gives us valuable evidence as to the nature and purpose both of the "neutrality" and of the "guarantee."

In 1867, owing to the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation and the establishment in its place of the North German Federation under the leadership of Prussia, a question of great difficulty arose as to the position of Luxemburg. The fortifications of that city, which in 1815 were regarded as one of the necessary barriers against the encroachments of France, were of such importance that there had been given to Prussia the right and duty of maintaining a garrison in them. This right had been continued in 1839, but it was desired in 1867 that it should cease. The discussion on this question nearly led to war between France and Prussia. Bismarck, however, who did not desire war, was, in opposition to public opinion in Germany and to the wishes of his own King, willing to agree to give up this right; he required, however, in return for this some security that Luxemburg should not be seized by France. The matter was referred to a conference which met in London. An acute difference arose between England and Prussia. Bismarck made an absolute condition that the neutrality of Luxemburg, *guaranteed by the Powers*, should be the essential part of the agreement. Russia and Austria agreed, and France also desired this. The British Government, however, was very unwilling to undertake any guarantee of the kind. The reason of this is obvious; the fate of Luxemburg was not a matter of any immediate interest to Great Britain, and this country could not bind herself to defend the neutrality and independence, if necessary, by war. The position of Luxemburg and Belgium were quite different; above all, as Luxemburg had no sea coast, it would be impossible for Great Britain effectively to

enforce its will, and a country such as Great Britain cannot afford to undertake serious responsibilities which it is not prepared to carry out to the uttermost. Lord Stanley therefore proposed that the Powers should respectively promise to maintain the principle of neutrality, but without any guarantee; this was a formula which had been used a few years before when the Ionian Islands were declared neutral. Prussia refused to accept this; she stated that a mere promise of the Powers was not sufficient; she could not take part in the conference until the essential point, "the effective protection of neutrality by European guarantee," was provided for. Eventually the difficulty was overcome by a suggestion made by the Russian Ambassador that each individual Power should not undertake the guarantee for itself, but that there should be a common or collective guarantee. This was accepted by Lord Stanley and eventually embodied in the treaty, the second clause of which is as follows:

The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg . . . shall henceforth form a perpetually neutral State. It shall be bound to observe the same neutrality towards all other States. The high contracting parties engage to respect the principle of neutrality stipulated by the present Article. That principle is and remains placed under the sanction of the collective guarantee of the Powers signing parties to the present treaty, with the exception of Belgium, which is itself a neutral State.

The importance of this, as illustrating the value of the guarantee to Belgium, is obvious; it shows that then it was considered that every Power had an individual responsibility, quite apart from the action of the other Powers, to interpose in order actively to protect Belgian neutrality. It is also to be observed that it was Prussia which especially insisted upon the value of such a guarantee.¹

At this time the independence of Belgium was subjected to the most dangerous attack which had hitherto been made on it. The Emperor Napoleon had, in fact, in 1866 suggested an arrangement with Prussia in which the Emperor undertook not to oppose the federation of North Germany under the leadership

¹ This account is based on that given in the "*Begründung des deutschen Reiches*" by Professor von Sybel, the official historian of the Prussian Government.

of Prussia on condition that Prussia would support by arms the conquest of Belgium by France and "continue to support it with all her forces by sea and land against any Power which in this eventuality declared war."

This proposal was not accepted by Prussia, and when war began in 1870 Bismarck felt that he could in no better way secure the interest and moral support of Great Britain than by disclosing these proposals which had been made to him.

The outbreak of war between the German Confederation and France threw new light upon the precise meaning of the guarantees. Prussia and France both declared that they had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality, and both countries gave written assurances of this. The British Government, however, felt that in this crisis it was necessary to define the situation more precisely. They therefore formed a separate and identical treaty with each of the two Powers.

If during the said hostilities the armies of the North German Confederation and its allies (or the French armies) should violate the neutrality she (H.M. the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland) would be prepared to co-operate with the Emperor of the French, or respectively the King of Prussia, for the defence of the same in such manner as may be mutually agreed upon, employing for that purpose her naval and military forces to ensure its observance and to maintain, in conjunction with His Prussian Majesty (His Imperial Majesty), then and thereafter the independence and neutrality of Belgium.

It is clearly understood that Her Majesty the Queen . . . does not engage herself by this treaty to take part in any of the general operations of the war now carried on between the North German Confederation and France beyond the limits of Belgium.

This treaty was to be binding during the war and for twelve months after the conclusion of peace, and it was specifically determined that "on the expiration of that time the independence and neutrality of Belgium will continue to rest as heretofore on the first Article of the quintuple Treaty of the 19th April, 1839."

This treaty is therefore one supplementary to the Treaties of 1839, and specifically "proclaims that they shall continue in full force after it has expired." In itself it has the special object of determining how in this particular case the general guarantee was to be enforced. It added nothing to the principle of the original document, but provided means of carrying it into effect. It shows

that the guarantee was then regarded as a solemn and binding obligation by Great Britain, and it shows also that she was prepared to use all necessary measures to enforce it. In this particular case it was hoped that it might be maintained without recourse to a general state of war, but only by the more limited means of an occupation of the country and local military operations. It is noticeable that the two other contracting parties, Austria and Russia, took no part in this convention. The reason is obvious: they could not in the same way as could England easily throw troops into Belgium; they could only have acted by war or warlike demonstrations in other parts of Europe, and it was extremely desirable for France and Germany, as well as for the whole of Europe, that they should not be involved in the war which was beginning. The proceedings, in fact, show that on any particular occasion the guarantee is to be enforced by such reasonable steps as may on that occasion be most suitable for the end in view.

It is well known with what strictness the neutrality not only of Belgium, but also of the other country which is in a similar condition, namely Switzerland, was observed during the war. Both Belgium and Switzerland put their armies on a war footing, themselves occupied the country, and not a single French or German soldier was allowed to enter their territories; when a French army was driven to the Swiss frontier it was at once disarmed. No more striking illustration of the strictness with which the treaties were observed could be given than from the course of the operations immediately preceding and during the battle of Sedan. It is no exaggeration to say that a large part of the French army could have been saved from the disaster which resulted if there had been open to them a retreat over Belgian territory. This was firmly closed, and the Emperor and the army of France had in consequence to surrender.

When, therefore, the war was over and the temporary convention had ceased, the original Treaty of 1839 resumed its force with greater additional authority.¹

¹ Among many worthless arguments which have been produced during the controversy of the last few months perhaps the worst is the suggestion that the Treaty of London ceased to be binding upon Prussia after she joined the German Empire. We seem to owe this to a Professor Burgess, of Harvard University, and it has found some currency in

There have been treaties which, as time went on, lost their importance, and it is possibly true that States cannot always afford to continue their adherence to obligations made under completely different circumstances. This did not apply to the Treaty of London. The longer it existed, the more important it became ; with age it had not become decrepit, but had, like the similar treaties establishing the neutrality of Switzerland, become incorporated as a prominent and essential part of the public law of Europe.

For the next thirty years the question of Belgian neutrality sinks into the background. Hitherto the danger had arisen from France ; that was now over, and at first, at any rate, no danger was to be anticipated from Germany. Bismarck had, in 1870, so completely identified himself with the maintenance of this treaty, he had so categorically and repeatedly declared that Prussia would not and could not violate a solemn engagement of this kind, that so long as he remained at the head of affairs there was ample security. As the years went by the question entered on a new phase. Hitherto what danger there had been had always come from France, for France had been warlike and aggressive. Circumstances changed, and the treaties which had been a defence for Belgium against attack on the south came to have an equal importance against attack from the east. We must see how it came about that danger was to be apprehended from Germany.

For very many years, probably as far back as 1878 or even 1875, the possibility of a war on two fronts against Russia and France must have been carefully considered by the German General Staff. They doubtless had, as was their duty, made out in full detail alternative plans of campaign. On military grounds there were very great advantages to be anticipated if an invasion of France could be begun through Belgian territory ; this would enable them to avoid the very great loss of life that

this country. It is significant that no German writing for his own countrymen has even suggested this point, the absurdity of which will be evident to any one who had any knowledge of European history ; quite apart from other reasons, it is of course categorically disposed of by the statement of the special Treaty of 1870, which definitely said that on the lapse of this treaty that of 1839 would be reinstated in full force.

would be entailed by a frontal attack on the French fortified positions between Luxemburg and Switzerland. This was important in any circumstances; it would become still more so if there were a war not only against France but against Russia, for this would make it desirable to crush the French resistance before the Russian armies could come into the field, and this could most easily be done by an advance in force over the Belgian plain against the comparatively undefended northern frontier of France.

At the same time the possibility had always to be kept in mind that the French themselves might take the offensive, violate the Treaty of London and try to anticipate the German attack by advancing through Belgium by Liège. In the disturbed years immediately following the war of 1871 there may naturally have been a real apprehension of such an attack, and this may have continued down to the fall of Boulanger in 1889.

The consideration of these different plans of campaign would be originally purely a military matter. The General Staff would have to make out their arrangements for every possible contingency. The question whether they should be permitted to make the attack by Belgium was one essentially for the politicians, for this concerns matters outside the functions of the military authority. Although we have no information, we can probably rest assured that so long as Bismarck held the post of Chancellor he would have placed his veto on German aggression in this form, for it was a constant maxim of his to which I think there is no exception, that a country such as Germany could always be trusted to observe treaties to which she had given her agreement. He was much too far-sighted to ignore the immense importance, military as well as political, of this and he never failed to take into consideration the moral effect of a political action. He would have known that any immediate success on the field of battle could not compensate for the enormous loss of honour and influence which must attend the direct violation of any solemn international engagement.

During the decade succeeding his retirement, Western Europe was peaceful, and there was no reason to anticipate any immediate outbreak of war with France. For the moment the matter had ceased to have any immediate importance. After 1900 the complexion of affairs gradually altered, and from

at least 1904, if not earlier, the outbreak of war became a contingency which had to be recognised. It is just from this time that we find strategic railway lines being built on the Belgian frontier, and other steps being taken which seem to indicate that the military authorities had received permission to take all preparatory measures which would enable them to throw large forces rapidly into Belgium. It is at this time that we find also serious anxiety beginning to show itself in Belgium as to the safety of their eastern frontier, and that the French and English find it necessary to consider what their plan of operation would be if they had to meet an attack of this kind.

It is in 1911 that we have for the first time any definite evidence as to the view taken on this matter by the German Government. It was very shortly after the present Chancellor had assumed office. When it had been suggested to him that a declaration in the German Parliament would serve to calm public opinion and dispel the distrust which was so regrettable from the point of view of the relations between the two countries, he made a very remarkable answer: "he declared that Germany had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality but he considered that in making a public declaration Germany would weaken her military position in regard to France, who, secure on her northern side, would concentrate all her energies on the east." ¹

This, it must be remembered, was an explanation made to Belgium, that is to the country which had most ground to rely on Germany's observance of treaty. It shows conclusively that at this time the military project of an advance through Belgium had passed out of the stage of an academic discussion by the General Staff, that it had been put forward to the Government as a desirable project, and it shows also that the Government were willing to take all the advantages which might come from a belief that Germany proposed to violate her treaties. A natural answer would, of course, have been that as Germany had promised to respect the neutrality of Belgium she could be relied upon to do so, and that every other hypothesis must be at once rejected as an insult to the German Government. This view Herr Bethmann-Hollweg does

¹ B. 12.

not seem to have taken. He was quite prepared to allow it to be considered throughout Europe that Germany would disregard her pledged word. In this it is clear that the honour of Germany ceased to be a matter to be taken into account.

Of course the advantage which might come from this course of action was an important one; the French in making their dispositions would have to take into account the defence of the northern as well as the eastern frontier; anxiety on this point could not fail to have a serious effect on their success and safety whatever method of attack was eventually selected.

May we not, however, suggest that a further conception was at work? Given that the German army wished to invade Belgium it might be possible to arrange that this could be done and at the same time avoid the political inconveniences of an open breach of faith. This could be brought about if the French were led to anticipate an attack through Belgium and, eager to defend themselves, were sufficiently imprudent to anticipate the attack, precipitate matters, take the initiative and themselves throw troops into Belgium before the German invasion had begun.

It is quite possible that the German Government anticipated that the British and the French would take some such course; the more open and obvious was the danger from Germany the more likely it might appear that they would do so. It is quite possible that it did not enter into the calculations of the German Government that the Western Powers intended not to allow themselves to be perturbed by the military menace, but simply to keep their promise and abide by their treaties. This is a course of action which we can easily see would not naturally appear to the Chancellor most probable—men always judge others by themselves.

This did not prevent the German Government at a later date declaring that they intended to respect the treaties: the following is an extract from the Report of a debate in the Budget Committee of the German Reichstag of April 29, 1914:

A member of the Social Democrat Party said: "The approach of a war between Germany and France is viewed with apprehension in Belgium, for it is feared that Germany will not respect the neutrality of Belgium."

Herr von Jagow, Secretary of State, replied : " Belgian neutrality is provided for by International Conventions, and Germany is determined to respect those Conventions."

This declaration did not satisfy another member of the Social Democrat Party. Herr von Jagow said that he had nothing to add to the clear statement he had made respecting the relations between Germany and Belgium.

In answer to fresh inquiries by a member of the Social Democrat Party, Herr von Heeringen, the Minister of War, replied : " Belgium plays no part in the causes which justify the proposed reorganisation of the German military system. That proposal is based on the situation in the East. Germany will not lose sight of the fact that the neutrality of Belgium is guaranteed by international treaty."

A member of the Progressive Party having once again spoken of Belgium, Herr von Jagow repeated that this declaration in regard to Belgium was sufficiently clear.¹

The possibility of an attack by means of Belgium, which had been clearly shown for many years, could not of course be ignored by the French in their plans of defence, and it would equally have to be taken into consideration by the British military authorities as soon as the possibility of a war against Germany on the side of France had come within the range of practical politics. Any common action by the French and British armies would be necessarily much influenced by this.

If the German advance were limited to the eastern frontier of France, Belgium of course would not be involved, for there was no intention whatever on the English side of attacking Germany by way of Belgium. If the Germans were to attack by Belgium this would, at once, completely change the whole strategic position, and in particular it would alter the disposition of any English troops that were landed on the Continent. Were the Germans to invade Belgium it would, of course, be open to the Allies to do the same ; in fact it would be their duty at once to come to the help of Belgium and protect her. In this case, however, it was obvious that the British forces would naturally be diverted to this area of war, and immediately on landing they would have to be sent north to co-operate with the Belgian army in defence of the country.

If, however, their co-operation was to be effective, it would be essential to know in advance what provision Belgium would

¹ B. 12 (enclosure).

be able to make for self-defence, and in addition to have full details drawn up on all such matters as provisioning, means of communication, transport.

As we now know, this was the subject of detailed conversations which were carried on during 1906 between the British Military Attaché and General Ducarne, Chief of the Belgian General Staff. Our knowledge of these comes from the confidential report by General Ducarne to the Minister of War which was discovered in Brussels and published by the German Government. It throws a most interesting light upon the situation, and it is a most valuable addition to our knowledge of the events preceding the war. The conversations were kept within strict limits. They were based on the assumption that the British troops would land on the north coast of France. It was specifically laid down that the British troops should not enter Belgium unless the neutrality of Belgium had already been violated by Germany; if this condition did not come into force, then of course the whole discussion would be purely academic and of no practical effect. It was agreed also that the conversations did not in any way bind either Government; no treaty or agreement was made. The question whether even in the case of German violation of neutrality the English should intervene in Belgium was reserved for the political chiefs.

The question of the landing of the British army, not at the French ports but at Antwerp, was raised, but at this time was ruled out on technical considerations—for this would take much longer, and also because this could not have been undertaken without the consent of Holland.

I have the honour to furnish herewith a summary of the conversations which I have had with Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston, which I have already reported to you
General Ducarne,
September, 1906. verbally.

His first visit was in the middle of January. Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston told me of the pre-occupation of the British General Staff concerning the general political situation and the existing possibilities of war. Should Belgium be attacked, it was proposed to send about 100,000 men.

The lieutenant-colonel having asked me how we should interpret such a step, I answered that, from the military point of view, it could only be advantageous; but that this question of intervention had also a political side, and that I must accordingly consult the Minister of War.

Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston replied that his Minister at Brussels would speak about it to our Minister for Foreign Affairs.

He continued as follows: The disembarkation of the British troops would take place on the French coast, in the neighbourhood of Dunkirk and Calais, in such a manner that the operation might be carried out in the quickest possible way.¹ Landing at Antwerp would take much longer, as larger transports would be required, and, moreover, the risk would be greater.

This being so, several other points remained to be decided, viz. transport by rail, the question of requisitions to which the British army might have recourse, the question of the chief command of the allied forces.

He inquired whether our arrangements were adequate to secure the defence of the country during the crossing and transport of the British troops—a period which he estimated at about ten days.

I answered that the fortresses of Namur and Liège were safe against a surprise attack, and that in four days our field army of 100,000 men would be ready to take the field. After having expressed his entire satisfaction at what I had said, my visitor emphasised the following points: (1) Our conversation was absolutely confidential; (2) it was in no way binding on his Government; (3) his Minister, the British General Staff, he, and myself were the only persons then aware of the matter; (4) he did not know whether his Sovereign had been consulted.

At a subsequent meeting Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston assured me that he had never received any confidential information from other military attachés about our army. He then gave me a detailed statement of the strength of the British forces: we might rely on it that, in twelve or thirteen days, two army corps, four cavalry brigades, and two brigades of mounted infantry would be landed. . . .

The British Attaché then spoke to me of various other questions, viz. (1) The necessity of maintaining secrecy about the operations, and of ensuring that the Press should observe this carefully; (2) the advantages there would be in attaching a Belgian officer to each British staff, an interpreter to each commanding officer, and gendarmes to each unit to help the British military police.

At another interview Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston and I examined the question of combined operations in the event of a German attack directed against Antwerp, and on the hypothesis of our country being crossed in order to reach the French Ardennes.

¹ The following marginal note occurs in the facsimile:

(Translation.)

“The entry of the English into Belgium would only take place after the violation of our neutrality by Germany.”

Later on, the colonel signified his concurrence in the scheme I had laid before him, and assured me of the assent of General Grierson, Chief of the British General Staff. . . .

In the course of our conversations I took the opportunity of convincing the Military Attaché of our resolve to impede the enemies' movements as far as lay within our power, and not to take refuge in Antwerp from the outset. Lieutenant-Colonel Barnardiston, on his side, informed me that he had at present little confidence in the support or intervention of Holland. He likewise confided to me that his Government intended to move the British base of supplies from the French coast to Antwerp as soon as the North Sea had been cleared of all German warships.¹

With this the matter was left at this stage: it did not pass outside military circles; no political discussion took place, and no treaty or convention was made or even considered. This is shown by a renewal of the discussions which took place in April 1912.

The British Military Attaché asked to see General Jungbluth. These gentlemen met on April 23rd.

April 24, 1912. Lieutenant-Colonel Bridges told the general that

Great Britain had, available for despatch to the Continent, an army composed of six divisions of infantry and eight brigades of cavalry, in all 160,000 men. She had also all that she needed for home defence. Everything was ready.

The British Government, at the time of the recent events, would have immediately landed troops on our territory, even if we had not asked for help.

The general protested that our consent would be necessary for this.

The Military Attaché answered that he knew that, but that as we were not in a position to prevent the Germans passing through our territory, Great Britain would have landed her troops in any event.

As to the place of landing, the Military Attaché was not explicit. He said the coast was rather long; but the general knows that Mr. Bridges made daily visits to Zeebrugge from Ostend during the Easter holidays.

The general added that, after all, we were, besides, perfectly able to prevent the Germans from going through.

¹ "Collected Diplomatic Documents," pp. 354 ff. A copy of the facsimile of the original documents will be found in "The Anglo-Belgian Conventions," by Emile Brunet, a translation of which has been published by Hicks, Wilkinson, and Shears.

This is ample evidence that the previous discussions had not passed beyond the stage which has already been shown. We get from this, however, also a new idea that the English would if necessary land troops in Belgium to oppose a German invasion even in the case that the Belgian Government had not asked for their help. The expression "England would have landed her troops *in any event*," does not, of course, mean in the event of the Germans not invading Belgium, but only in the event that the Belgians had not called for their help.

This attitude of the Military Attaché was of course perfectly correct. Belgium was bound not to allow her territory to be used as a basis for warlike operations against either France or England, and the two latter Powers would have the right to interfere by force of arms to prevent it being so used even if they were not requested to do so by Belgium.

This, in fact, serves to bring into strong relief the extreme value and importance of the whole conception of Belgian neutrality. The strict insistence on the neutrality, whether with or without the co-operation of Belgium itself, was the only means of saving this country from becoming again, what it had so often been in the past, the scene of a great struggle between other Powers.

This is a full account of these conversations ; a few observations may be added.

The previous narrative will have shown that in these conversations there was nothing inconsistent either with the letter or the spirit of the treaties. It was the duty of Belgium to make such provision as seemed necessary to guard against attack from whatever quarter it might come. In former years she had done so by an elaborate system of fortifications, for at the time when the treaties were made, and for many years after, military authorities attached a higher value to fortified places than they now do. Protection against France was provided by the southern fortresses. And from 1850 onwards the fortifications of Antwerp and Liège had been re-built so as to make these two cities amongst the strongest places in Europe. In this way Belgium was also protected against an attack either from the sea or on the eastern frontier. As, however, the possibility of an attack from Germany became more notorious, this was no longer sufficient, and during the last years a complete reorganisation

of the army had been undertaken ; this went so far that in 1913 a system of compulsory military service was introduced. In this, Belgium was following the example of Switzerland, for Switzerland, as Belgium, recognised that she had a duty to defend her own neutrality.

Even this, however, was not sufficient ; the documents and treaties quoted show that in the event of a real and serious danger from any side it was not only the right but it was also the duty of the Belgian Government to concert the necessary measures for the defence of its territory with the guaranteeing Powers. This is what the guarantee meant. If the danger came from France she would have, as was expressly recognised, to consult with Germany and England ; if it came from Great Britain, she would have to take the necessary measures in consultation with Germany and France. In order that resistance to proposed attack should be effective it would be necessary that there should be consultation before the invasion had actually begun to take place ; in the terms of the secret treaty we have quoted, it would begin as soon as the safety of the country was compromised.

In order to justify such consultation two conditions must be present : first, the danger must be a real one—that is, there must be genuine and substantial ground for anticipating that an attack was meditated. By this was not meant, of course, that some government should have openly and publicly declared to the world that they proposed on a given day to send their armies across the Belgian frontier. This is not the way in which governments act. It would be sufficient if there were clear indications—as for instance, the disposition of the troops, the building of railways, the establishment of depôts. Secondly, the measures concerted with the guaranteeing powers must be strictly limited, and it must be definitely provided that the actual co-operation should not begin until the attack was made. There must be no precautionary offensive ; there must be no attack on another Power to anticipate a possible attack from it ; all must be strictly defensive.

Now in the case before us these two conditions were present. The reality of the danger was open, flagrant, and avowed ; so far as it was possible for those not in the secret of the German military authorities to discover their intentions, everything

pointed to the fact that full arrangements had been made and were being continued to throw large forces into Belgium as soon as an outbreak of war with France took place. Moreover, as we have seen, the German Government definitely encouraged this apprehension on the ground that it would throw the French into doubt as to the line of attack which might be made. The first condition therefore was fulfilled; the security of the country was undoubtedly compromised. The second condition was also fulfilled, for all these conversations were expressly based on the condition that co-operation should only take place if, as a matter of fact, the Germans entered Belgium.

These conversations, then, were neither in letter nor in spirit a violation of neutrality. On the contrary they were the only means of preserving it. So far from regretting or condemning them, the feeling of every observer must be one of deep regret that they were not carried to a conclusion so as to enable their object to be carried out and to protect Belgium from all the miseries that have in fact come upon her.

It has often been stated or insinuated that as a matter of fact the conversations went beyond what is disclosed. The German apologists constantly repeat that the intention was not to protect Belgian territory, but to make an unprovoked attack on Germany through Belgium. It might be enough to point out that there is not and never has been a particle of evidence adduced for this. We can be quite sure that if there were such evidence it would not have been hidden from the world, and we may disregard vague and unfounded charges of this nature.

We can indeed be confident that evidence of these charges will not be forthcoming, and for a very sufficient reason. The proposals attributed to Great Britain are such that no government could possibly have contemplated them. Quite apart from all considerations of loyalty and honour, it must be remembered that it was and always has been in the British interests to insist on the maintenance of neutrality in the strictest possible manner. From the English point of view the essential thing was to prevent either the French or the Germans establishing themselves on the Flemish coast and at Antwerp. If they themselves had taken the initiative and sent troops into Belgium they would be creating the very danger they wished to avoid. They would at once have risked everything on the success of a great land

campaign. A defeat or even temporary repulse in a campaign of this kind would at once bring the German arms to the coast of the North Sea, and enable Germany to use this coast as a basis for naval warfare against England. No success on land, however great, would compensate for this risk. Even if a land campaign of this kind were brought to a successful conclusion there would at once have arisen the possibility of a fresh attack in a future war; Belgian neutrality would have disappeared; the whole situation would have become again such as it was in the eighteenth century, and there would have been opened up the prospect of a series of wars which would have thrown upon this country the permanent necessity of always being ready to take part in a continental war for the defence of the Low Countries.

No British Government could ever have been guilty of an act so short-sighted, so absolutely contrary to the whole traditions and interests of the country. Had such an act been suggested by the Press, by a politician, even by one or more individual ministers, we may rest assured that as soon as it passed out of the stage of an irresponsible suggestion, and was subjected to serious and responsible consideration by the Cabinet, it would have been at once rejected and absolutely ruled out of court.

There were, indeed, rumours current that some offensive action on the part of Great Britain was contemplated. This was brought to the notice of the British Government, and in consequence of this Sir Edward Grey sent a despatch to the British Minister at Brussels, which was afterwards communicated to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In speaking to the Belgian Minister to-day I said, speaking unofficially, that it had been brought to my knowledge that there was apprehension in Belgium lest we should be the first to violate Belgium neutrality. I did not think that this apprehension could have come from a British source.

Sir Edward Grey,
April 7, 1913.

The Belgian Minister informed me that there had been talk, in a British source which he could not name, of the landing of troops in Belgium by Great Britain, in order to anticipate a possible despatch of German troops through Belgium to France.

I said that I was sure that this Government would not be the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium, and I did not believe

that any British Government would be the first to do so, nor would public opinion here ever approve of it. What we had to consider, and it was a somewhat embarrassing question, was what it would be desirable and necessary for us, as one of the guarantors of Belgian neutrality, to do if Belgian neutrality was violated by any Power. For us to be the first to violate it and to send troops into Belgium would be to give Germany, for instance, justification for sending troops into Belgium also. What we desired in the case of Belgium, as in that of other neutral countries, was that their neutrality should be respected, and as long as it was not violated by any other Power we should certainly not send troops ourselves into their territory.

CHAPTER XVII

THE VIOLATION OF BELGIAN NEUTRALITY

THE position of the Belgian Government was then clearly defined and simple. They proposed strictly to carry out their obligations under the Treaty of London, and they expected, as they had a right to do, that every other State would act in the same way. Their obligations, however, were, as we have seen, not merely passive but active. In the case of war between France and Germany it was incumbent on them to take active steps, if it became necessary, to prevent either nation making use of Belgian territory in order to attack the other.

From the very beginning of the crisis they commenced action on these lines. On Friday, the 24th, a despatch was drawn up and communicated to the Belgian Ministers in the different capitals of Europe as follows :

The international situation is serious, and the possibility of a war between several Powers naturally preoccupies the Belgian Government.

Belgium has most scrupulously observed the duties of a neutral State imposed upon her by the treaties of April 19, 1839 ; and those duties she will strive unflinchingly to fulfil, whatever the circumstances may be.

The friendly feelings of the Powers towards her have been so often reaffirmed that Belgium confidently expects that her territory will remain free from any attack, should hostilities break out upon her frontiers.

All necessary steps to ensure respect of Belgian neutrality have nevertheless been taken by the Government. The Belgian army has been mobilised and is taking up such strategic positions as have been chosen to secure the defence of the country and the respect of its neutrality. The forts of Antwerp and on the Meuse have been put in a state of defence.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the nature of these measures. They are intended solely to enable Belgium to fulfil

her international obligations; and it is obvious that they neither have been nor can have been undertaken with any intention of taking part in an armed struggle between the Powers or from any feeling of distrust of any of those Powers.

In accordance with my instructions, I have the honour to communicate to Your Excellency a copy of the declaration by the Belgian Government, and to request that you will be good enough to take note of it.

A similar communication has been made to the other Powers guaranteeing Belgian neutrality.¹

This was not to be presented immediately, but was accompanied by directions as to the use to be made of it if the danger of war became more imminent.

The Belgian Government have had under their consideration whether, in present circumstances, it would not be advisable to address to the Powers who guarantee Belgian independence and neutrality a communication assuring them of Belgium's determination to fulfil the international obligations imposed upon her by treaty in the event of a war breaking out on her frontiers.

M. Davignon,
July 24.

The Government have come to the conclusion that such a communication would be premature at present, but that events might move rapidly and not leave sufficient time to forward suitable instructions at the desired moment to the Belgian representatives abroad.

In these circumstances I have proposed to the King and to my colleagues in the Cabinet, who have concurred, to give you now exact instructions as to the steps to be taken by you if the prospect of a Franco-German war became more threatening.

I enclose herewith a Note, signed but not dated, which you should read to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and of which you should give him a copy, if circumstances render such a communication necessary.

I will inform you by telegram when you are to act on these instructions.

This telegram will be despatched when the order is given for the mobilisation of the Belgian army if, contrary to our earnest hope and to the apparent prospect of a peaceful settlement, our information leads us to take this extreme measure of precaution.²

¹ Enclosure to B. 2.

² B. 2. The fact that the Belgian Government took this step as early as July 24th is valuable evidence as to the interpretation which an impartial observer placed on the Austrian Note

On Wednesday, the day of Russian partial mobilisation, a further step was taken and the army placed upon a strengthened peace footing: this step was explained in a circular despatch.

The Belgian Government have decided to place the army upon a strengthened peace footing.

This step should in no way be confused with mobilisation.

Owing to the small extent of her territory, all Belgium consists, in some degree, of a frontier zone. Her army on the ordinary peace footing consists of only one class of armed militia; on the strengthened peace footing, owing to the recall of three classes, her army divisions and her cavalry division comprise effective units of the same strength as those of the corps permanently maintained in the frontier zones of the neighbouring Powers.

This information will enable you to reply to any questions which may be addressed to you.¹

On Friday, the 31st, in consequence of the military measures taken in Germany war between Germany and France was obviously imminent. On that day the French Minister presented a note with the object of reassuring the Belgians that no danger to Belgium was to be apprehended from the massing of troops upon the frontier.

I seize this opportunity to declare that no incursion of French troops into Belgium will take place, even if considerable forces are massed upon the frontiers of your country. France does not wish to incur the responsibility, so far as Belgium is concerned, of taking the first hostile act.

Instructions in this sense will be given to the French authorities.²

M. Davignon on receiving this, after thanking M. Klobukowski for his communication, added:

I felt bound to observe that we had always had the greatest confidence in the loyal observance by both our neighbouring States of their engagements towards us. We have also every reason to believe that the attitude of the German Government will be the same as that of the Government of the French Republic.

Apparently they did not know of the intention of invading their country which had been disclosed to Sir E. Goschen on Wednesday.

¹ B. 8.

² B. 9.

The same day the mobilisation of the army was ordered, to take effect next morning. That day also Sir Francis Villiers came to see M. Davignon and informed him of the request sent to the French and German Governments, and at the same time presented to him a Note to the following effect:

In view of existing treaties, I am instructed to inform the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs of the above, and to say that Sir Edward Grey presumes that Belgium will do her utmost to maintain her neutrality, and that she desires and expects that the other Powers will respect and maintain it.¹

Sir F. Villiers,
July 31.

Some conversation followed which is reported by M. Davignon.

I hastened to thank Sir Francis Villiers for this communication which the Belgian Government particularly appreciate, and I added that Great Britain and the other nations guaranteeing our independence could rest assured that we would neglect no effort to maintain our neutrality, and that we were convinced that the other Powers, in view of the excellent relations of friendship and confidence which had always existed between us, would respect and maintain that neutrality.

M. Davignon,
July 31.

I did not fail to state that our military forces, which had been considerably developed in consequence of our recent re-organisation, were sufficient to enable us to defend ourselves energetically in the event of the violation of our territory.

In the course of the ensuing conversation, Sir Francis seemed to me somewhat surprised at the speed with which we had decided to mobilise our army. I pointed out to him that the Netherlands had come to a similar decision before we had done so, and that, moreover, the recent date of our new military system, and the temporary nature of the measures upon which we then had to decide, made it necessary for us to take immediate and thorough precautions. Our neighbours and guarantors should see in this decision our strong desire to uphold our neutrality ourselves.

Sir Francis seemed to be satisfied with my reply, and stated that his Government were awaiting this reply before continuing negotiations with France and Germany, the result of which would be communicated to me.²

The same day there was also a conversation between the German Minister and Baron van der Elst, Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Baron van der Elst drew Herr

¹ B. 11.

² B. 11.

von Below's attention to the previous discussions as to Belgian neutrality which have been explained above. Herr von Below said that he knew of these conversations, and added "that he was certain that the sentiments expressed at that time had not changed."

This then was in the nature of an assurance that Belgium could still rely on the statement made to the Reichstag Commission that Belgian neutrality would be maintained.

On Saturday M. Klobukowski made a verbal communication to M. Davignon :

I have the honour to inform you that the French Minister has made the following verbal communication to me :

" I am authorised to declare that, in the event
 M. Davignon, of an international war, the French Government,
 August 1. in accordance with the declarations they have
 always made, will respect the neutrality of Belgium. In the
 event of this neutrality not being respected by another Power,
 the French Government, to secure their own defence, might
 find it necessary to modify their attitude."

I thanked His Excellency and added that we on our side had taken without delay all the measures necessary to ensure that our independence and our frontiers should be respected.¹

On this day also, now that the mobilisation had begun, a telegram was sent to the Belgian Envoys abroad to carry out the instructions sent to them a week before.

Up to this date, therefore, nothing had happened to make the Belgian Government apprehensive that their country would be in danger. Their attitude towards all countries engaged was similar ; there was no distrust shown of Germany, there was no intimacy, no private discussion with England and France ; on the contrary a strict reserve was maintained.

During the period of suspense as to the action of Belgium, Sir E. Grey took action of which we only hear indirectly :

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed the British Ministers in Norway, Holland, and Belgium, that Great Britain
 expects that these three kingdoms will resist
 Count de Lalaing, German pressure and observe neutrality. Should
 August 4. they resist they will have the support of Great
 Britain, who is ready in that event, should the three above-
 mentioned Governments desire it, to join France and Russia, in

¹ B. 15.

offering an alliance to the said Governments for the purpose of resisting the use of force by Germany against them, and a guarantee to maintain the future independence and integrity of the three kingdoms. I observed to him that Belgium was neutral in perpetuity. The Minister for Foreign Affairs answered: This is in case her neutrality is violated.¹

Owing to later developments these instructions were revoked.

The next morning, however, news came of the violation of the territory of Luxemburg, a faint warning of the fate that might befall them. During the morning M. Davignon had a fresh conversation with Sir F. Villiers as to which he reports:

He told me that he had lost no time in telegraphing our conversation of July 31st to his Government, and that he had been careful to quote accurately the solemn declaration which he had received of Belgium's intention to defend her frontiers from whichever side they might be invaded. He added: We know that France has given you formal assurances, but Great Britain has received no reply from Berlin on this subject.

The latter fact did not particularly affect me, since a declaration from the German Government might appear superfluous in view of existing treaties. Moreover the Secretary of State had reaffirmed, at the meeting of the committee of the Reichstag of April 29, 1913, "that the neutrality of Belgium is established by a treaty which Germany intends to respect."²

Up to this time, then, the Belgian Government had been able to rely upon the honesty of the German professions that they would respect the Treaty of London.

I was careful to warn the German Minister through Monsieur de Bassompierre that an announcement in the Brussels Press by

M. Davignon, August 2. Monsieur Klobukowski, French Minister, would make public the formal declaration which the latter had made to me on the 1st August. When I next

met Herr von Below he thanked me for this attention, and added that up to the present he had not been instructed to make us an official declaration, but that we knew his personal opinion as to the feelings of security, which we had the right to entertain towards our eastern neighbours. I at once replied that all that we knew of their intentions, as indicated in numerous previous conversations, did not allow us to doubt their perfect correctness

¹ B. 37.

² B. 38.

towards Belgium. I added, however, that we should attach the greatest importance to the possession of a formal declaration, which the Belgian nation would hear of with joy and gratitude.¹

It was at 7 o'clock on the same evening that Herr von Below called at the Ministry and handed in the following note :

(Very confidential.)

Reliable information has been received by the German Government to the effect that French forces intend to march on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur. This information leaves no doubt as to the intention of France to march through Belgian territory against Germany.

Herr von Below,
August 2.

The German Government cannot but fear that Belgium, in spite of the utmost goodwill, will be unable, without assistance, to repel so considerable a French invasion with sufficient prospect of success to afford an adequate guarantee against danger to Germany. It is essential for the self-defence of Germany that she should anticipate any such hostile attack. The German Government would, however, feel the deepest regret if Belgium regarded as an act of hostility against herself the fact that the measures of Germany's opponents force Germany, for her own protection, to enter Belgian territory.

In order to exclude any possibility of misunderstanding, the German Government make the following declaration :—

1. Germany has in view no act of hostility against Belgium. In the event of Belgium being prepared in the coming war to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality towards Germany, the German Government bind themselves, at the conclusion of peace to guarantee the possessions and independence of the Belgian Kingdom in full.

2. Germany undertakes, under the above-mentioned condition, to evacuate Belgian territory on the conclusion of peace.

3. If Belgium adopts a friendly attitude, Germany is prepared, in co-operation with the Belgian authorities, to purchase all necessities for her troops against a cash payment, and to pay an indemnity for any damage that may have been caused by German troops.

4. Should Belgium oppose the German troops, and in particular should she throw difficulties in the way of their march by a resistance of the fortresses on the Meuse, or by destroying railways, roads, tunnels, or other similar works, Germany will, to her regret, be compelled to consider Belgium as an enemy.

In this event, Germany can undertake no obligations towards Belgium, but the eventual adjustment of the relations between the two States must be left to the decision of arms.

¹ B. 19.

The German Government, however, entertain the distinct hope that this eventuality will not occur, and that the Belgian Government will know how to take the necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of incidents such as those mentioned. In this case the friendly ties which bind the two neighbouring States will grow stronger and more enduring.¹

It will be noted that the sole justification here given for the proposed invasion of Belgium is that French troops were being collected on the northern frontier of France. This collection of troops is interpreted as implying the intention of an advance into Belgium in order to attack Germany.

We have, however, seen from the despatches quoted above (pp. 329, 359) that it had been the deliberate policy of the German Government to encourage the French to apprehend an attack through Belgium with the object of bringing about a division of the French forces—that is, with the object of inducing the French to concentrate troops on the Belgian frontier so as not to leave it undefended.

As a matter of fact we now know that no such concentration had been made; the French army had been arranged with the sole object of meeting an attack from the east, and the northern frontier was left almost unguarded. This statement is false; but supposing the French had done this, the establishment of these forces at the point of danger, at Namur and Givet, and even farther west, would have been an arrangement which the German Government had deliberately forced upon France by refusing to give the required statement that it would itself not take the initiative in invading Belgium. The German Government had led Europe to know or believe that an attack on France through Belgium was a project which had to be seriously taken into consideration. No sooner had the French taken this step, which, according to the deliberate plan of the German General Staff, they were forced to take in self-defence against an attack which the Germans themselves had foreshadowed, than the disposition of these troops is at once interpreted as evidence of hostility against Belgium.

What a masterpiece of diplomacy! What an admirable exposition of methods of making war! You deliberately encourage the belief that a dangerous and fatal attack will

¹ B. 20.

be made on an enemy on a side from which they are almost undefended; a few movements of troops are begun in order at the last moment to guard against the danger, and at once the accusation is launched that they are proposing to take the offensive!

It was obviously the anticipation of the German Government that if the danger to which they were exposed was made sufficiently obvious, the French would as a matter of fact be driven into invading Belgium, and then it could be shown to the whole of Europe that it was the French and not the Germans who had first violated Belgian soil. In this they failed; they failed because the French and the British Governments were perfectly aware of the game which was being played, were perfectly aware of the fatal menace which was hanging over their heads, still in the most scrupulous and careful manner they provided that not a single act should be committed or a single proposal made which was not of a defensive character.

As M. Davignon says, no hesitation was possible as to the reply called for by the amazing proposal of the German Government. This was communicated to Herr von Below at seven o'clock on Monday morning.

The German Government stated in their Note of the 2nd August 1914 that according to reliable information French forces intended to march on the Meuse via Givet and
M. Davignon, August 3. Namur, and that Belgium, in spite of the best intentions, would not be in a position to repulse, without assistance, an advance of French troops.

The German Government, therefore, considered themselves compelled to anticipate this attack and to violate Belgian territory. In these circumstances, Germany proposed to the Belgian Government to adopt a friendly attitude towards her, and undertook, on the conclusion of peace, to guarantee the integrity of the kingdom and its possessions to their full extent. The Note added that if Belgium put difficulties in the way of the advance of German troops, Germany would be compelled to consider her as an enemy, and to leave the ultimate adjustment of the relations between the two States to the decision of arms.

This Note has made a deep and painful impression upon the Belgian Government.

The intentions attributed to France by Germany are in contradiction to the formal declarations made to us on August 1st, in the name of the French Government.

Moreover, if, contrary to our expectation, Belgian neutrality should be violated by France, Belgium intends to fulfil her international obligations and the Belgian army would offer the most vigorous resistance to the invader.

The treaties of 1839, confirmed by the treaties of 1870, vouch for the independence and neutrality of Belgium under the guarantee of the Powers, and notably of the Government of His Majesty the King of Prussia.

Belgium has always been faithful to her international obligations, she has carried out her duties in a spirit of loyal impartiality, and she has left nothing undone to maintain and enforce respect for her neutrality.

The attack upon her independence with which the German Government threaten her constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. No strategic interest justifies such a violation of law.

The Belgian Government, if they were to accept the proposals submitted to them, would sacrifice the honour of the nation and betray their duty towards Europe.

Conscious of the part which Belgium has played for more than eighty years in the civilisation of the world, they refuse to believe that the independence of Belgium can only be preserved at the price of the violation of her neutrality.

If this hope is disappointed the Belgian Government are firmly resolved to repel, by all the means in their power, every attack upon their rights.¹

Particular attention must be given to the statement that the Belgian army would have resisted a French invasion just as they eventually did the German invasion. This is in entire agreement with the whole tenor both of their words and acts.

Before it was despatched, however, another very remarkable interview had taken place. Herr von Below called at the unusual hour of half-past one in the morning to see Baron van der Elst. We have the following report of the interview :

He said that he had been instructed by his Government to inform the Belgian Government that French dirigibles had thrown bombs, and that a French cavalry patrol had crossed the frontier in violation of international law, seeing that war had not been declared.

The Secretary-General asked Herr von Below where these incidents had happened, and was told that it was in Germany. Baron van der Elst then observed that in that case he could not understand the object of this communication. Herr von Below

¹ B. 22.

stated that these acts, which were contrary to international law were calculated to lead to the supposition that other acts, contrary to international law, would be committed in France.¹

It is not necessary after what was said above to discuss this alleged attack by French aviators; they are probably purely fictitious. In any case they had nothing to do with Belgium. Has an unfortunate servant of the State ever been called from his bed to receive so futile a communication?

Even now the Belgian Government refrained from any appeal for armed assistance to the guaranteeing Powers, so careful were they by no act or word to afford excuse even for the suggestion that they were violating the spirit of their engagements.

As you are aware, Germany has delivered to Belgium an ultimatum which expires this morning, 3rd of August, at 7 a.m. As no act of war has occurred up to the present, the
M. Davignon,
 August 3. Cabinet has decided that there is, for the moment, no need to appeal to the guaranteeing Powers.

The French Minister has made the following statement to me upon the subject:

"Although I have received no instructions to make a declaration from my Government, I feel justified, in view of their well-known intentions, in saying that if the Belgian Government were to appeal to the French Government as one of the Powers guaranteeing their neutrality, the French Government would at once respond to Belgium's appeal; if such an appeal were not made it is probable, that—unless of course exceptional measures were rendered necessary in self-defence—the French Government would not intervene until Belgium had taken some effective measure of resistance."

I thanked Monsieur Klobukowski for the support which the French Government had been good enough to offer us in case of need, and I informed him that the Belgian Government were making no appeal at present to the guarantee of the Powers, and that they would decide later what ought to be done.²

To the assurance which I gave him that if Belgium appealed to the guarantee of the Powers against the violation of her neutrality by Germany, France would at once
M. Klobukowski,
 August 3. respond to her appeal, the Minister for Foreign Affairs answered:

"It is with great sincerity that we thank the Government of the Republic for the support which it would eventually be

¹ B. 21.

² B. 24. Cf. F. 142; E. 151.

able to offer us, but under present conditions we do not appeal to the guarantee of the Powers. At a later date the Government of the King will weigh the measures which it may be necessary to take.”¹

French Government have offered through their Military Attaché the support of five French army corps to the Belgian Government. Following reply has been sent to-day :

Sir F. Villiers,
August 3.

“ We are sincerely grateful to the French Government for offering eventual support. In the actual circumstances, however, we do not propose to appeal to the guarantee of the Powers. Belgian Government will decide later on the action which they may think it necessary to take.”²

But an appeal for diplomatic support to Great Britain was sent in a personal telegram from the King of the Belgians to King George.

Mindful of the numerous marks of friendship of Your Majesty and of Your Majesty's predecessors, as well as the friendly attitude of Great Britain in 1870 and of the proofs of sympathy which she has once again shown us, I make the supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of Your Majesty's Government to safeguard the neutrality of Belgium.³

The Cabinet was still sitting when this message arrived. Even then, as we have seen, there was no unanimity. The resistance of the opponents of war had not been overcome. Up to this moment, indeed, they did not know what line Belgium herself would take. It was possible, it indeed seemed probable, that she would offer to acquiesce in the German invasion; that she would at most confine herself to a formal protest. In this case there would naturally be the greatest reluctance on the part of many members of the Government to take the initiative and to participate in acts which would inevitably subject the territory of Belgium to all the horrors of war. They were still searching for some means by which this might be avoided. Now at last this scruple need detain them no longer; the call had come from Belgium herself, and could this appeal be refused? Was England to turn a deaf ear and to neglect her solemn promise? It was an appeal that would come with special force just to those whom regard for the integrity and welfare of Belgium had hitherto made most reluctant to give their assent to a decision

¹ F. 142

² E. 151.

³ B. 25.

which would imply the advance of an English army into Belgium.

The question has been asked again and again, why England went to war. As an historic fact it was this appeal from the King of the Belgians which was the last determining cause.

It was now possible as it had never been before to go to the House of Commons with a clear and unanswerable case, and to do this with a consciousness that only one answer could possibly be given, and when Sir Edward Grey made his speech he was the mouthpiece of an almost unanimous Cabinet.

Sir Edward Grey received this as he was on his way to the House of Commons.

Diplomatic intervention took place last week on our part. What can diplomatic intervention do now? We have great and vital interests in the independence—and integrity is the least part—of Belgium. If Belgium is compelled to submit to allow her neutrality to be violated, of course the situation is clear. Even if by agreement she admitted the violation of her neutrality, it is clear she could only do so under duress. The smaller States in that region of Europe ask but one thing. Their one desire is that they should be left alone and independent. The one thing they fear is, I think, not so much that their integrity but that their independence should be interfered with. If in this war which is before Europe the neutrality of one of those countries is violated, if the troops of one of the combatants violate its neutrality and no action be taken to resent it, at the end of the war, whatever the integrity may be, the independence will be gone.¹

Sir E. Grey,
August 3.

That night Sir Edward Grey informed the Belgian Minister that if neutrality was violated that meant war with Germany. This was confirmed by a telegram sent the next morning to Sir Francis Villiers.

You should inform Belgian Government that if pressure is applied to them by Germany to induce them to depart from neutrality, His Majesty's Government expect that they will resist by any means in their power, and that His Majesty's Government will support them in offering such resistance, and that His Majesty's Govern-

Sir E. Grey to
Sir F. Villiers,
August 4.

¹ English Blue Book, p. 131.

ment in this event are prepared to join Russia and France, if desired, in offering to the Belgian Government at once common action for the purpose of resisting use of force by Germany against them, and a guarantee to maintain their independence and integrity in future years.¹

Before this telegram had been received German troops had already crossed the frontier, and the following Note was handed in at six o'clock in the morning by the German Minister :

In accordance with my instructions, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that in consequence of the refusal of the Belgian Government to entertain the well-intentioned proposals made to them by the German Government, the latter, to their deep regret, find themselves compelled to take—if necessary by force of arms—those measures of defence already foreshadowed as indispensable, in view of the menace of France.²

Herr v. Bulow,
August 4.

The action of the Belgian Minister was prompt and decisive. The following message was sent to the German Minister :

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that from to-day the Belgian Government are unable to recognise your diplomatic status and cease to have official relations with you. Your Excellency will find enclosed the passports necessary for your departure with the staff of the legation.³

M. Davignon,
August 4.

Has there ever been a case where the Minister of a Great Power has been dismissed by the Government of the country to which he was accredited with such curt contempt? Who will say that the treatment awarded him was undeserved?

And now the Belgian Government at last sent the appeal to Great Britain, France, and Russia for their armed intervention in order to oppose the German attack and to secure her independence and integrity.

The Belgian Government regret to have to announce to Your Excellency that this morning the armed forces of Germany entered Belgian territory in violation of treaty engagements. The Belgian Government are firmly determined to resist by all the means in their power.

M. Davignon,
August 4.

Belgium appeals to Great Britain, France, and Russia to co-operate as guaranteeing Powers in the defence of her territory.

¹ E. 155.

² B. 27.

³ B. 31.

There should be concerted and joint action to oppose the forcible measures taken by Germany against Belgium, and, at the same time, to guarantee the future maintenance of the independence and integrity of Belgium,

Belgium is happy to be able to declare that she will undertake the defence of her fortified places.¹

There remains only the final rupture between Great Britain and Germany.

On the receipt of the appeal from the King of the Belgians Sir Edward Grey had telegraphed to Sir Edward Goschen as follows :

The King of the Belgians has made an appeal to His Majesty the King for diplomatic intervention on behalf of Belgium in the following terms :

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
August 4.

His Majesty's Government are also informed that the German Government have delivered to the Belgian Government a Note proposing friendly neutrality entailing free passage through Belgian territory, and promising to maintain the independence and integrity of the kingdom and its possessions at the conclusion of peace, threatening in case of refusal to treat Belgium as an enemy. An answer was requested within twelve hours.

We also understand that Belgium has categorically refused this as a flagrant violation of the law of nations.

His Majesty's Government are bound to protest against this violation of a treaty to which Germany is a party in common with themselves, and must request an assurance that the demand made upon Belgium will not be proceeded with and that her neutrality will be respected by Germany. You should ask for an immediate reply.²

Sir Edward Goschen at once acted on this :

In accordance with the instructions contained in your telegram of the 4th instant I called upon the Secretary of State that afternoon and inquired, in the name of His Majesty's

Sir E. Goschen,
August 8.

Government, whether the Imperial Government would refrain from violating Belgian neutrality.

Herr von Jagow at once replied that he was sorry to say that his answer must be "No," as, in consequence of the German troops having crossed the frontier that morning, Belgian neutrality had been already violated. Herr von Jagow again went into the reasons why the Imperial Government had been obliged to take

¹ B. 40.

² E. 153.

this step, namely, that they had to advance into France by the quickest and easiest way, so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations and endeavour to strike some decisive blow as early as possible. It was a matter of life and death for them, as if they had gone by the more southern route they could not have hoped, in view of the paucity of roads and the strength of the fortresses, to have got through without formidable opposition, entailing great loss of time. This loss of time would have meant time gained by the Russians for bringing up their troops to the German frontier. Rapidity of action was the great German asset, while that of Russia was an inexhaustible supply of troops. I pointed out to Herr von Jagow that this *fait accompli* of the violation of the Belgian frontier rendered, as he would readily understand, the situation exceedingly grave, and I asked him whether there was not still time to draw back and avoid possible consequences, which both he and I would deplore. He replied that, for the reasons he had given me, it was now impossible for them to draw back.¹

This statement is perfectly frank; no reason is given for German action except the strategical one; there is here nothing of the foolish and dishonest pretexts which had been put forward on the preceding day, but if they had been really believed, would not Herr von Jagow, who obviously was seriously desirous of keeping the regard and respect of Sir Edward Goschen, have referred to them? But if they are not mentioned in this conversation we find them put forward in a last despairing appeal to Great Britain not to make the attack on Belgium a cause of war, which was sent on the same day and certainly within a very few hours of the time when this conversation took place. About the same time the following message was received by Sir E. Grey from the German Embassy:

Please dispel any mistrust that may subsist on the part of the British Government with regard to our intentions, by repeating most positively formal assurance that, even in the case of armed conflict with Belgium, Germany will, under no pretence whatever, annex Belgian territory. Sincerity of this declaration is borne out by fact that we solemnly pledged our word to Holland strictly to respect her neutrality. It is obvious that we could not profitably annex Belgian territory without making at the same time territorial acquisitions at expense of Holland. Please impress upon Sir E. Grey that German army could not be exposed to French attack across Belgium, which

Herr von Jagow,
August 4.

¹ E. 160.

was planned according to absolutely unimpeachable information. Germany had consequently to disregard Belgian neutrality, it being for her a question of life or death to prevent French advance.¹

Here again we find the statement that a French attack across Belgium had been planned according to absolutely unimpeachable information. If this was so, why did Herr von Jagow not lay stress on the matter at the interview with the British Ambassador? Surely the reason is that he knew that it would be impossible to maintain the correctness of this excuse in personal conversation, and that if he had attempted to do so he would have exposed himself to a repudiation of the charge which would have been most damaging to him. It was good enough for a written document, but Herr von Jagow had too much self-respect to put it forward in personal conversation.

This message is indeed a final proof of the extreme anxiety to avoid a conflict with Great Britain: it is also evidence of the fixed determination to accede to every request except this; a further concession is made that now under no circumstances will any Belgian territory be annexed, but the essential point is still refused, and refused we cannot doubt because this was a requirement of the military authorities and their orders must be obeyed.

This remained the one irreconcilable difference, and this it was which now led to the final step.

The following telegram was sent to Berlin:

We hear that Germany has addressed note to Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs stating that German Government will be compelled to carry out, if necessary, by force of arms, the measures considered indispensable.

Sir E. Grey to
Sir E. Goschen,
August 4.

We are also informed that Belgian territory has been violated at Gemmenich.

In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that Germany declined to give the same assurance respecting Belgium as France gave last week in reply to our request made simultaneously at Berlin and Paris, we must repeat that request, and ask that a satisfactory reply to it and to my telegram of this morning be received here by 12 o'clock to-night. If not, you are instructed to ask for your passports, and to say that His Majesty's Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves.²

¹ E. 157.

² E. 159.

THE VIOLATION OF BELGIAN NEUTRALITY 387

That afternoon the Chancellor had explained to the Reichstag the events which brought about the war with Russia. In doing so he spoke of Belgium :

Gentlemen, we are now in a position of necessity; and necessity knows no law. Our troops have occupied Luxemburg; perhaps they have already entered Belgian territory. Gentlemen, this is in contradiction to the rules of international law. The French Government has declared in Brussels that it is willing to respect the neutrality of Belgium so long as it is respected by the enemy. But we knew that France stood prepared for an inroad. France could wait, but we not. A French inroad on our flank on the Lower Rhine would have been fatal to us. So we were forced to set aside the just protests of the Luxemburg and Belgian Governments. The wrong—I speak openly—the wrong that we now do we will try to make good again as soon as our military ends have been reached. When one is threatened as we are, and all is at stake, he can only think of how he can hack his way out.

Here again we have repeated the ungrounded charge that France was prepared for an inroad. If we leave this aside the statement of the Chancellor leaves little to criticise. Here at least he is honest, straightforward, truthful; never probably was he so much himself as when he gave his open and unvarnished explanation of the action of his Government. It was received with enthusiasm from every part of the House, and by it the German Reichstag and the German nation made themselves participants in this violation of law and honour, which they have since then never ceased to applaud.

The final scene is related by Sir Edward Goschen.

During the afternoon I received your further telegram of the same date, and, in compliance with the instructions therein contained, I again proceeded to the Imperial Foreign Office and informed the Secretary of State that unless the Imperial Government could give the assurance by 12 o'clock that night that they would proceed no further with their violation of the Belgian frontier and stop their advance, I had been instructed to demand my passports and inform the Imperial Government that His Majesty's Government would have to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany was as much a party as themselves.

Herr von Jagow replied that to his great regret he could give no other answer than that which he had given me earlier in the

Sir E. Goschen,
August 8.

day, namely, that the safety of the Empire rendered it absolutely necessary that the Imperial troops should advance through Belgium. I gave His Excellency a written summary of your telegram and, pointing out that you had mentioned 12 o'clock as the time when His Majesty's Government would expect an answer, asked him whether, in view of the terrible consequences which would necessarily ensue, it were not possible even at the last moment that their answer should be reconsidered. He replied that if the time given were even twenty-four hours or more, his answer must be the same. I said that in that case I should have to demand my passports. This interview took place at about 7 o'clock. In a short conversation which ensued Herr von Jagow expressed his poignant regret at the crumbling of his entire policy and that of the Chancellor, which had been to make friends with Great Britain, and then, through Great Britain, to get closer to France. I said that this sudden end to my work in Berlin was to me also a matter of deep regret and disappointment, but that he must understand that under the circumstances and in view of our engagements, His Majesty's Government could not possibly have acted otherwise than they had done.

I then said that I should like to go and see the Chancellor, as it might be, perhaps, the last time I should have an opportunity of seeing him. He begged me to do so. I found the Chancellor very agitated. His Excellency at once began a harangue, which lasted for about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—"neutrality," a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her.¹ All his efforts in that direction had been rendered useless by this last terrible step, and the policy to which, as I knew, he had devoted himself since his accession to office had tumbled down like a house of cards. What we had done was unthinkable; it was like striking a man from behind while he was fighting for his life against two assailants. He held Great Britain responsible for all the terrible events that might happen. I protested strongly against that statement, and said that, in the same way as he and Herr von Jagow wished me to understand that for strategical reasons it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate the latter's neutrality, so I would wish him to understand that it was, so to speak, a matter of "life and death" for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solid engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. That solemn compact simply had to be kept, or what confidence could any one have in engagements

¹ In a later interview the Chancellor has confirmed this account of this conversation.

given by Great Britain in the future? The Chancellor said, "But at what price will that compact have been kept. Has the British Government thought of that?" I hinted to His Excellency as plainly as I could that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded as an excuse for breaking solemn engagements, but His Excellency was so excited, so evidently overcome by the news of our action, and so little disposed to hear reason that I refrained from adding fuel to the flame by further argument. As I was leaving he said that the blow of Great Britain joining Germany's enemies was all the greater that almost up to the last moment he and his Government had been working with us and supporting our efforts to maintain peace between Austria and Russia. I said that this was part of the tragedy which saw the two nations fall apart just at the moment when the relations between them had been more friendly and cordial than they had been for years. Unfortunately, notwithstanding our efforts to maintain peace between Russia and Austria, the war had spread and had brought us face to face with a situation which, if we held to our engagements, we could not possibly avoid, and which unfortunately entailed our separation from our late fellow-workers. He would readily understand that no one regretted this more than I.¹

That evening a noisy demonstration was made outside the British Embassy and stones were thrown at the windows. Sir Edward Goschen continues :

On the following morning, the 5th of August, the Emperor sent one of His Majesty's aides-de-camp to me with the following message :—

"The Emperor has charged me to express to Your Excellency his regret for the occurrences of last night, but to tell you at the same time that you will gather from those occurrences an idea of the feelings of his people respecting the action of Great Britain in joining with other nations against her old allies of Waterloo. His Majesty also begs that you will tell the King that he has been proud of the titles of British Field-Marshal and British Admiral, but that in consequence of what has occurred he must now at once divest himself of those titles."

I would add that the above message lost none of its acerbity by the manner of its delivery.

On the other hand, I should like to state that I received all through this trying time nothing but courtesy at the hands of Herr von Jagow and the officials of the Imperial Foreign Office.



APPENDIX A

STATEMENT BY SIR E. GREY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

July 27, 1914.

THE House, will of course, be aware through the public Press of what the nature of the situation in Europe is at this moment. I think that it is due to the House that I should give in short narrative form the position which His Majesty's Government have so far taken up.

Last Friday morning I received from the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador the text of the communication made by the Austro-Hungarian Government to the Powers, which has appeared in the Press, and which included textually the demand made by the Austro-Hungarian Government upon Serbia.

In the afternoon I saw other Ambassadors, and expressed the view that, as long as the dispute was one between Austria-Hungary and Serbia alone, I felt that we had no title to interfere, but that, if the relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia became threatening, the question would then be one of the peace of Europe; a matter that concerned us all.

I did not then know what view the Russian Government had taken of the situation, and without knowing how things were likely to develop I could not make any immediate proposition; but I said that, if relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia did become threatening the only chance of peace appeared to me to be that the four Powers—Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain—who were not directly interested in the Serbian question should work together both in St. Petersburg and Vienna simultaneously to get both Austria-Hungary and Russia to suspend military operations while the four Powers endeavoured to arrange a settlement.

After I had heard that Austria-Hungary had broken off diplomatic relations with Serbia, I made by telegraph yesterday afternoon the following proposal, as a practical method of applying the views that I had already expressed:

I instructed His Majesty's Ambassadors in Paris, Berlin, and Rome to ask the Governments to which they were accredited whether they would be willing to arrange that the French, German, and Italian Ambassadors in London should meet me in a Conference to be held in London immediately to endeavour to find a means of arranging the present difficulties. At the same time, I instructed His Majesty's

Ambassadors to ask those Governments to authorise their representatives in Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Belgrade to inform the Governments there of the proposed Conference, and to ask them to suspend all active military operations pending the result of the Conference.

To that I have not yet received complete replies, and it is, of course, a proposal in which the co-operation of all four Powers is essential. In a crisis so grave as this, the efforts of one Power alone to preserve the peace must be quite ineffective.

The time allowed in this matter has been so short that I have had to take the risk of making a proposal without the usual preliminary steps of trying to ascertain whether it would be well received. But, where matters are so grave and the time so short, the risk of proposing something that is unwelcome or ineffective cannot be avoided. I cannot but feel, however, assuming that the text of the Serbian reply as published this morning in the Press is accurate, as I believe it to be, that it should at least provide a basis on which a friendly and impartial group of Powers, including Powers who are equally in the confidence of Austria-Hungary and of Russia, should be able to arrange a settlement that would be generally acceptable.

It must be obvious to any person who reflects upon the situation that the moment the dispute ceases to be one between Austria-Hungary and Serbia and becomes one in which another Great Power is involved, it can but end in the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the Continent of Europe at one blow; no one can say what would be the limit of the issues that might be raised by such a conflict; the consequences of it, direct and indirect, would be incalculable.

Mr. Harry Lawson : May I ask the right hon. gentleman whether it is true that this morning the German Emperor accepted the principle of mediation which he has proposed ?

Sir E. Grey : I understand that the German Government are favourable to the idea of mediation in principle as between Austria-Hungary and Russia, but that as to the particular proposal of applying that principle by means of a Conference which I have described to the House the reply of the German Government has not yet been received.

APPENDIX B

THE following despatch is printed in full as it gives in the most authentic form the point of view of the German Government and their defence against the charges brought against them both by France and England.¹ It was published long after the issue of the English Blue Book and some weeks after that of the French Yellow Book and there had therefore been ample time to consider the several points which required an answer. It will be seen that it contains serious mis-statements as to the progress of the negotiations. These are pointed out in the notes. Apart from them the statement resolves itself into this that Germany had, before the beginning of the crisis and before the issue of the Austrian Note, determined that the Serbo-Austrian conflict was an affair which only concerned Austria-Hungary and that Austria had a "firm will" to regulate the Serbian question without the intervention of the Powers.

Here we are on clear ground. This is no doubt perfectly true; and this was throughout the one and essential cause of war. When we get down to the bottom of the subject of dispute we are confronted by the repeated statement that there was a "firm will" on the part of Austria, and that Germany had made up her mind on a point of principle. To this firm will of Austria and to the determination by Germany it was expected that the other Powers of Europe should give way; on this point no compromise, mediation, or discussion of any kind was to be allowed. But it was known beforehand that this was the very point on which Russia would not and could not give way. What therefore it all comes to is this: that Germany, having come to a determination, attempted to enforce the acceptance of this upon Europe at the risk of war and deliberately brought on the war rather than alter her will and determination.

This of course raises the whole question of the relations of States to one another. It will generally be agreed that, if there is a fundamental point at dispute between two Great Powers on a matter of the very first importance, war can only be avoided if some kind of compromise is accepted and that Power is responsible for the war which refuses any kind of compromise though it is offered by the other.

¹ In addition to this reference may be made to a semi-official article in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of the 21st December which contains a full criticism of many points in the French Yellow Book.

It will also be noticed that apart from this point that Germany had made up her mind no reason of any kind is given for rejecting the Conference proposals.

The attempt to make the movements of the English fleet responsible for the failure of the proposals for mediation is of course an after-thought; it receives no support from the telegrams exchanged at the time, there is not the slightest suggestion that Sir Edward Grey's warning had an unfavourable influence on the decision of Austria-Hungary; if it had any it must have, as was intended, been connected in such a way as to influence them to accept mediation. The exchange of telegrams with Russia and France will also have shown that it did not in the least make either of these two countries less willing to accept mediation; right up to the last moment they continued perfectly ready to accept Sir Edward Grey's suggestion, and the statement by M. Viviani seems to be absolutely correct.

The only object of introducing the passage bearing on the English fleet is to try and show that it was Great Britain who was responsible for the war.

CIRCULAR NOTE BY THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR.

Extract from the "Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" of December 24, 1914.

According to Wolff's Telegraphic Bureau, the Imperial Chancellor has addressed the following memorandum to the Imperial Ambassadors and Envoys :

HEADQUARTERS,

December 24, 1914.

In the speech made by Minister President Viviani in the French Chamber is contained a passage that France and Russia had on the 31st of July agreed to the English proposal to *stop military preparations and to begin negotiations in London*. If Germany had given her assent, peace could have been maintained even at this last hour.

As I cannot at the present moment contradict from the Tribune of the German Reichstag this false statement made in the French Parliament, I see myself compelled to send the following exposition to you with the request to make an extensive use of it.

The British proposal for a conference which is printed in the English Blue Book, No. 36, arises on the 26th July.¹

Its contents say that representatives of Germany, France, and Italy should meet with Sir Edward Grey in London for the purpose of discovering an issue from the difficulties which had arisen in the Serbian matter. From the beginning Germany took its stand on the point that the Serbo-Austrian conflict was an affair which only concerned the two States immediately indicated. Sir Edward Grey himself also later recognised this point of view.²

Germany was obliged to reject the English proposal for a conference, for it could not allow that Austria-Hungary should be subjected to a

tribunal of the Great Powers in a question which concerned its national existence and which only concerned Austria-Hungary. It is clear from the German White Book that Austria-Hungary looked on the proposal for a conference as unacceptable.³ By the declaration against Serbia it gave evidence of its firm will to regulate the Serbian question alone without the intervention of the Powers. At the same time, however, it declared in order to satisfy all just claims of Russia, its complete territorial disinterestedness as regards Serbia. As Russia was not satisfied with this assurance, European questions sprang out of the Serbian question, and this first found its expression in a difference between Austria-Hungary and Russia. In order to prevent a European conflict developing out of this difference, it was necessary to find a new basis upon which immediate action of the Powers could be begun. It was Germany to whom belongs the merit of having first trod this ground.⁴

The Secretary of State Von Jagow in his conversation with the British Ambassador on the 27th of July pointed out that in the wish of Russia to negotiate directly with Austria-Hungary, he saw an improvement of the situation and the best prospect for a peaceful solution. From the day on which it was first expressed, Germany supported in Vienna with all the energy which stood at its command this desire by which the English conference idea was according even to the Russian opinion for the time put aside. No State can have striven more honestly and with more energy to maintain the peace of the world than Germany had.⁵

England also now gave up the idea of pursuing her conference idea and on her side supported the conception of direct negotiations between Vienna and St. Petersburg (Blue Book, No. 67).⁶

These negotiations, however, met with difficulties, and difficulties which did not arise from Germany and Austria-Hungary, but from the entente Powers.

If Germany's endeavour was to be successful, it required good will on the part of the Powers who were not immediately engaged; it required also that those who were principally engaged should hold their hand, for if either of the two Powers between whom mediation was to be made interrupted by military operations action which was proceeding, it was from the beginning clear that this action could never attain its end.⁷

Now how did it stand with the good will of the Powers? The attitude of France is clearly shown in the French Yellow Book. She did not trust German assurances. All the steps of the German Ambassador, Freiherr von Schoen were received with mistrust. His wish for mediating influence of France at St. Petersburg was not regarded, for they believed that they must assume that the steps taken by Herr von Schoen were intended "à compromettre la France au regard de la Russie." The French Yellow Book shows that France did not take a *single positive step* in the interest of peace.⁸

What attitude did England take in the diplomatic conversation? She gave the appearance of mediating up to the last hour, but her external actions were directed to a humiliation of the two Powers of the Triple Alliance. England was the first Great Power which ordered military

preparations on a great scale and thereby created a feeling, particularly in Russia and France, which was in the highest degree adverse to mediatory action. From the report of the French Chargé d'Affaires in London on July 22nd (Yellow Book, No. 66), it follows that as early as July 24th the Commander of the English fleet had discreetly taken steps for the collection of the fleet at Portland. Great Britain therefore mobilised sooner even than Serbia. Moreover, Great Britain refused just what France did, to act in a moderating and restraining manner at St. Petersburg.

On the warning from the English Ambassador at St. Petersburg from which it was clearly to be seen that only a warning to Russia to hold back her mobilisation could save the situation, Sir Edward Grey did nothing but let matters go their own way.⁹

At the same time, however, he believed that it would be useful to point out to Germany and Austria-Hungary, if not quite clearly, still sufficiently so, that England could also take part in a European war. At the same time, therefore, when England, though letting drop the idea of a conference,¹⁰ gave the appearance of wishing that Austria-Hungary should show itself conciliatory under the mediation of Germany, Sir Edward Grey directs the attention of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in England to the mobilisation of the English fleet (Blue Book, No. 48), gives the Russian Ambassador to understand that England also could take part in a war, and at once informs the Ambassadors of the Triple Entente of this warning which he had addressed to Germany, by which action the victory of the War Party in St. Petersburg was sealed.

This was just the attitude, which according to the better informed opinion of the English Ambassador Buchanan was the worst adapted for bringing about good feeling between the Powers.

Under these difficulties it would be regarded as a special success that Germany succeeded in making Austria-Hungary inclined to follow the wish of Russia and enter into separate conversations. Had Russia, without on her side taking military measures, continued the negotiations with Austria-Hungary, which had only mobilised against Serbia, the complete prospect of maintenance of the world's peace would have been maintained. Instead of this Russia mobilised against Austria-Hungary, by which Sazonof was quite clear (see Blue Book, No. 78) that with this all direct understanding with Austria-Hungary fell to the ground.¹¹ The laborious result of the German negotiations for mediation was thereby overthrown by a single blow.¹²

What happened now on the part of the entente Powers in order to preserve peace at this last hour?

Sir Edward Grey again took up his conference proposal. In accordance also with the view of M. Sazonof, the suitable moment had now come in order, under the pressure of Russian mobilisation against Austria-Hungary, again to recommend the old English idea of quadruple conversation (German White Book, page 7).

Count Pourtalès did not leave the Minister in doubt, that according to his view the entente Powers thereby were requiring from Austria-

Hungary just what they had not been willing to suggest to Serbia, namely, that she should give way under military pressure.¹³

Under these circumstances the conference idea could not possibly be sympathetic to Germany and Austria-Hungary. Notwithstanding this, Germany declared in London that she accepted in principle the proposal for the intervention of the four Powers, but that it was merely the form of the conference which was disagreeable to her.¹⁴ At the same time the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg pressed Sazonof on his side also to make concessions in order to render a compromise possible. It is well known that these efforts remained fruitless.¹⁵

Russia herself seemed to take no more interest in the further mediatory activity of Germany at Vienna, which was continued until the last hour.¹⁶ She ordered the mobilisation of all her forces in the night between July 30th and 31st, which must have the mobilisation of Germany and the later declaration of war as its consequence.

In view of this course of events it cannot be understood how a responsible statesman can have the courage to maintain that Germany, who found herself confronted by Russian mobilisation, military preparations of France, and the mobilisation of the English fleet, could on July 31st still have saved peace by the acceptance of a conference which was to be conducted under the arms of the entente Powers.

It was not Germany, who continued to mediate at Vienna up to the last hour, who made the idea of mediation by four Powers impossible; it was the military measures of the entente Powers who spoke words of peace while they determined to make war.

NOTES.

* This is not quite correct. The British proposal was first made on the 24th of July and only took that definite form on the 26th, after the German assent to the principle had been given.

² Sir Edward Grey as early as July 24th said that Great Britain had no concern in the dispute between Austria and Serbia (E. 5), but he never said that this was not a matter which did not concern Russia.

³ See above, page 132; there is no evidence in the German White Book that Austria-Hungary disapproved of Sir Edward Grey's proposal of a conference for mediation as between Austria and Russia.

⁴ This statement, which is contrary to all the evidence, is contradicted by the next sentence, in which it is recognised that the wish for direct conversations emanated from Russia. Germany had nothing at all to do with this proposal.

⁵ In the exchange of correspondence at the time, this claim that Germany strongly supported the "conversations" is not made; there is a confusion with the resumption of conversations which took place later, that is on Thursday; for the earlier period, that is Monday or Tuesday, and it is to this period that the narrative refers, Germany herself did not at that time make this claim.

⁶ That is, Sir Edward Grey agreed to suspend the conference idea "as

long as there is the prospect of a direct exchange of views between Austria and Russia."

⁷ This statement is quite true and very important; the situation was such that any military operations would necessarily interfere with negotiations; it was under these circumstances that Austria declared war on Serbia and began operations; this it is which led to the rupture of the conversations and Russian mobilisation. This is not mentioned in this account, but the omission completely invalidates the whole statement, which becomes worthless.

⁸ The reference to the *pourparlers* at Paris is quite irrelevant. The conversations at St. Petersburg were not mentioned in them and in fact most of the discussions with Baron von Schoen took place before the suggestion had been made. It is of course quite untrue that France took no positive step in the interests of peace; she strongly and repeatedly supported the proposals which came from St. Petersburg and London.

⁹ Of course this is not the case; Sir Edward Grey did all he could to get Germany to agree to common action both at St. Petersburg and at Vienna. His attempts were frustrated by the German refusal to co-operate.

¹⁰ This is quite untrue. Sir Edward Grey never gave up the conference idea, he only held it over till he saw how the conversation at St. Petersburg developed; as soon as that broke down owing to the Austrian refusal to take part (Tuesday to Wednesday), he at once pressed forward the conference idea and offered to give it any form which the Germans preferred.

¹¹ The account of the collapse of the conversations is really an extraordinary perversion of the truth; it is represented that Russian mobilisation against Austria was the reason why conversations could not continue; this is of course absolutely and completely untrue. The Austrian Government declined conversations because they had gone to war with Serbia; this was on Tuesday. Russian mobilisation was not the cause but the result of this, and was not ordered till after the Austrians refused.

¹² The "laborious result of German negotiations" is pure fiction; at this period, that is when Russia mobilised against Austria-Hungary, German activity in favour of direct conversations had not begun.

¹³ This reference to Count Pourtalès' conversation is quite unintelligible (see p. 182).

¹⁴ The fact that Germany was asked herself to suggest the form in which the mediation should be conducted is not mentioned. It was ignored at the time when the offer was made, and to this day no attempt has ever been made to explain why it was not accepted.

¹⁵ This is untrue. M. Sazonof did make an offer.

¹⁶ As has been shown above, the mediatory activity of Germany brought about no results; it was impossible for Russia to take any interest in it, for throughout the whole of the Thursday, the day here referred to, nothing had been said to her by Germany, and Austria had made no sign; the Austrian Ambassador does not seem to have visited M. Sazonof between Wednesday and Friday evening.

APPENDIX C

NOTE ON MILITARY PREPARATIONS.

THROUGHOUT the correspondence frequent reference will be found to reports received by the different Governments as to the military preparations which were being made in other States.¹ For instance, on July 29th Herr von Jagow said that he was much troubled by "reports of mobilisation in Russia and of certain military measures, which he did not specify, being taken in France. He subsequently spoke of these measures to my French colleague, who informed him that the French Government had done nothing more than the German Government had done, namely, recall officers on leave. His Excellency denied that the German Government had done this, but as a matter of fact it is true." On other occasions the German Government complained of preparations being made by Russia beyond those which had been officially announced to them, as, *e.g.* on the 31st the Chancellor "was much taken up with the news of the Russian measures along the frontier" and in the same way the Russian Government supported their action by reference to reports as to German military preparations which had reached them.

In the present state of our knowledge it does not seem that much attention or importance can be given to statements of this kind; we have at present little means of checking or correcting them and the consideration of the whole matter must be deferred to a later date.

Generally speaking it may be assumed that from some date, not later than July 26th, every State on the Continent began to take all measures to put both the army and the navy on a war footing, so far as this could be done without exciting public attention. Any Government which had neglected this natural precautionary measure would have been guilty of serious oversight and neglect of duty towards its own country. In what precisely these measures consisted is a matter of indifference. We may, however, generally assume that officers and men on leave of absence were recalled, that all preparations were made for calling up the Reserves and all preliminary steps taken for collection of railway

¹ The whole question is dealt with at length by Mr. Price ("Diplomatic History of the War," pp. 94-114), who has collected a large amount of evidence from all sources.

material, horses, wagons, etc. In addition to this no doubt the garrisons and covering troops on the frontiers were put on a full war footing. At any rate in most countries there are arrangements in force by which these troops can be brought up to a full strength without a general order for calling in the Reserves. This, it may be assumed, would be one of the measures taken by the Russian Government under the provisional order made on July 26th; probably this applied to the garrisons on the German frontier as well as to those upon the Austrian frontier, and would explain the reports referred to by the Chancellor.

With regard to Russia, we have three telegrams from the military attaché at St. Petersburg to the German Government referring to these kind of preparations, it will be seen that none of them contain any information as to the calling up of the Reservists, and they do not seem to go beyond what had been openly avowed by the Russian Government.

Message to H.M. from General von Chelius (German honorary aide-de-camp to the Czar).

The manœuvres of the troops in the Krasnoe camp
 Count Pourtalès, were suddenly interrupted and the regiments
 July 25, returned to their garrisons at once. The manœuvres
 have been cancelled. The military pupils were raised to-day to the rank of officers instead of next fall. At headquarters there obtains great excitement over the procedure of Austria. I have the impression that complete preparations for mobilisation against Austria are being made.

The military attaché requests the following message to be sent to the General Staff:—

I deem it certain that mobilisation has been
 July 26. ordered for Kiev and Odessa. It is doubtful at
 Warsaw and Moscow and improbable elsewhere.

July 27. Kovno has been declared to be in a state of war.¹

With regard to Austria, we have full statements as to the complete mobilisation of the eight army corps on July 26th, and it appears that of these, two were in the north of the Empire and were stationed at places such that they could be used against Russia. We know also from German and Austrian sources that the covering troops in Galicia were put on a war footing on the 29th and 30th. There is, perhaps, some doubt as to the precise beginning of general mobilisation, and it is of course not easy to determine the stages by which a partial is transferred into a general mobilisation, but there is no doubt that it took place some time on the 31st.

As to France, we have the very full statement sent by the French Government for the information of the British Foreign Office on July 30th, and I do not know of anything having been published which is inconsistent with this. We know from another source that French officers on leave were first recalled on Monday the 27th, and on the same

¹ German White Book.

date arrangements were made for the collection of railway transport. (See p. 272.)

As to Germany, we are almost completely without any authentic information except as to the movements on the Western frontier. We have as to these several statements by the French Government which are to a considerable extent substantiated by reports which appeared in the newspapers at the same time. As a matter of fact it appears that the German army and the whole organisation had been brought to so high a pitch of efficiency that little, if anything, remained to be done to prepare for the final order of mobilisation. And the course of operations during the first days of the war shows that everything was ready when the reserves were summoned on August 1st. On the other hand, there can be no reasonable doubt that during the earlier days of the week the garrisons on the Western frontiers were put on a complete war footing and the German troops were advanced in considerable numbers to the frontier. We have no authentic information as to the Eastern frontier, but it will not be unfair to assume that similar steps were taken there also.

It would, of course, be easy to supplement this account by further statements which have from time to time appeared in the newspapers or been published by private individuals; it seems, however, wiser at the present period not to attempt any collection of evidence of this kind. In no case do these measures necessarily show a will to make war.

It would of course be different if we had any evidence as to the definite preparations by Germany before the 26th. The most important statement of this kind is that contained in the despatch from M. Jules Cambon on July 21st :

"I have also been assured that, from now on, the preliminary notices for mobilisation, the object of which is to place Germany in a kind of 'attention' attitude in times of tension, have been sent out here to those classes which would receive them in similar circumstances. That is a measure to which the Germans, constituted as they are, can have recourse without indiscretion and without exciting the people. It is not a sensational measure, and is not necessarily followed by full mobilisation, as we have already seen, but it is none the less significant."

If this were substantiated it would of course be of great importance as evidence of German preparations for war before the delivery of the Austrian ultimatum.

APPENDIX D

THE following despatch was published in the *North German Gazette* on the 12th of September. The following account is given of the manner in which it came into the hands of the German Foreign Office :

On the 31st of July a letter was posted in Berlin, addressed to Madame Clostermans, 107, Rue Froisoid, Brussels. As the Empire was declared in *a state of war* [*Kriegszustand*] on that day, and with this the forwarding of letters abroad ceased, the letter was returned to the Post Office with a note, "Detained on account of state of war." It remained there, and after the expiration of the regular period was officially opened in order to find out the name of the sender. In the outer cover was found a second envelope addressed to "His Excellency Monsieur Davignon, Minister of Foreign Affairs." As the name of the writer was not given on this cover, that was also opened. Within was found an official report of the Belgian Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, M. B. de l'Escaille, on the political situation on July 30th, which, in consideration of its political importance, was forwarded by the General Post Office to the Foreign Office.

795402.

ST. PETERSBURG,
July 30, 1914.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

To His Excellency Monsieur Davignon, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Sir,—Yesterday and the previous day passed in the expectation of events which must follow the declaration of war of Austria-Hungary against Serbia. The most contradictory reports were circulated without its being possible to distinguish what was true and what was false as regards the intentions of the Imperial [Russian] Government. It only remains indisputable that Germany has laboured here just as much as in Vienna to find some means of avoiding a general conflict, but that in this it has come on one side against the firm determination of the Vienna Cabinet not to draw back a step, and on the other side on the distrust of the St. Petersburg Cabinet as to the assurances of Austria-Hungary that she thinks only of punishing Serbia and not of seizing territory.

M. Sazonof has declared that it is impossible for Russia not to be prepared and not to mobilise, but that these preparations are not directed against Germany. This morning an official communication to the papers announces that "the Reservists in a definite number of Governments have been called to the Colours." Any one who knows the reserve of official Russian communications can quietly maintain that mobilisation is going on everywhere.

The German Ambassador declared this morning that he has come to the end of his labours for an agreement which had been continued without interruption since Saturday, and that he has scarcely any hope left. As I have just been told, the English Ambassador has also expressed himself to the same effect. England has quite at the last proposed arbitration. M. Sazonof answered, "We ourselves proposed it to Austria-Hungary, but they have rejected the proposal." To the proposal for a conference Germany answered by a proposal for an understanding between the Cabinets. One might in truth ask whether the whole world does not wish for war, and is not merely attempting to postpone the declaration of war to some extent in order to win time.

At first England gave it to be understood that she did not wish to be drawn into a conflict. Sir George Buchanan said this openly. To-day in St. Petersburg the people are firmly convinced, indeed they have assurances [*man hat sogar die Zusage*] that England will stand by France. This support has an extraordinary influence, and has done not a little to gain the upper hand for the War Party.

During the last days the Russian Government has given free play to all demonstrations in favour of the Serbians and hostile to the Austrians, and has not made any attempt to suppress them. In the Council of Ministers which took place yesterday morning differences of opinion still made themselves heard; the publication of mobilisation was postponed, but since then there has been a change, the War Party has got the upper hand, and mobilisation was made known at 4 o'clock this morning.

The army which feels itself strong is full of enthusiasm, and bases great hopes on the extraordinary progress which has been made since the Japanese war. The navy is still so far removed from the completion of plans for renewal and reorganisation that it really can hardly be counted. That is just the reason why the assurance of English support has acquired such great importance.

As I had the honour of telegraphing to you (T. 10) every hope of a peaceful solution seems to be over. This is the view of diplomatic circles.

For my telegram I used the route via Stockholm and the Northern Cable, as it is safer than the other. I am entrusting this report to a private messenger, who will post it in Germany.

(Signed) B. DE L'ESCAILLE.

This despatch must, of course, be used with a good deal of reserve. So far as I am aware the original has not been published, and the account of the manner in which it came into the possession of the German Government is not entirely satisfactory; it does not appear that all letters to neutral countries were detained even after the outbreak of war, and Belgium was not at war with Germany for another three days.

The writer is obviously not intimately acquainted with the progress of negotiations though he has a general knowledge of the situation, and repeats the rumours and gossip in those diplomatic circles which had not immediate knowledge of what was really happening.

The one statement on which attention has been fixed is that England had given "assurances" of support to Russia. The most important part is the sentence, "To-day in St. Petersburg people are firmly convinced, *indeed they have the assurance*, that England will stand by France." The first part of this is, of course, common knowledge, and is no more than can be found in the reports of any newspaper correspondent; there was a general conviction in Russia that they would have eventually English support; this conviction was strongest in those who were farthest removed from the centre of affairs, and probably no one knew so well as M. Sazonof how very uncertain the action of Great Britain was; the additional words which are printed in italics (which read rather like a later interpolation to the sentence), if they were in truth written by the Belgian Chargé d'Affaires, merely show how incorrect his information was. England had, of course, given no assurances of support. The words, if genuine, may represent an exaggerated and incorrect report as to Sir Edward Grey's statement to M. Cambon made on Wednesday; if handed on in the way in which rumours are handed on in political circles this might easily at third or fourth hand take some such incorrect form as this. It is, in truth, not worth troubling about this; we do not even know the text of the French original.

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